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ABSTRACT

This conference summary contains 36 presentations. Participants' comments, taken from response cards, are quoted throughout. Presentations from the Opening Plenary include a keynote address--"What Is Literacy?: Critical Issues for the Next Decade" (John Ryan) and four "Panelist Presentations" (Francis Kazemek, Lorraine Fox, Joyce White, Robin Silverman). Papers in the section, "Evening with Fernando Cardenal," are "Background" (Evelyn Murialdo); "Introduction" (David Cadman); "Special Presentation" (Fernando Cardenal); and "Closing Remarks" (Gillies Malnarich). Remaining presentations are as follows: "Understanding Literacy as a Developmental Process" (Francis Kazemek); "Closing Gaps between Research and Practice" (Pat Rigg); "Revealing Facts: Statistics Canada's 1990 Study" (Gilles Montigny, Stan Jones); "Learners Speak Out" (Bram Fisher et al.); "Puente Project: Berkeley, California" (Mary Healy et al.); "Talking about Lives: Planning Programs for Women" (Jennifer Horsman); "ALBSU's (Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit) Student Accreditation Initiative" (Judith Banbury); "Breaking the Stigma/Recruitment Strategies: Sweden" (Kjell Rubenson); "Read-Write: Kingston, Ontario" (Carynne Arnold); "Hackney Learning Centre: London, England" (Althea Williams); "Regina Library's Literacy Tutors: Saskatchewan" (Lorraine Hladik); "Combining Practice and Theory in Community Literacy" (Elaine Gaber-Katz, Gladys Watson); "Applying Freire, Rethinking Conceptions: Quebec" (Pierre Simard); "Promoting Learner-Driven Programs" (Sally McBeth); "Taking Multicultural Issues into Account: Toronto" (Manuel Pinto, Brenda Duncombe); "Treating Learners as Experts: Halifax, Nova Scotia" (Gary MacDonald); "Snowdrift Chipewyan Project: Northwest Territories" (Joanne Barnaby, Eleanor Millard); "Exchanging Viewpoints: Identifying Obstacles" (Tracy Defoe et al.); "BEST (Basic Education for Skills Training) Project: Ontario Federation of Labour" (Tamara Levine); "Reading/Writing On-the-Job: British Columbia" (Emily Goetz, Ron Brown); "Vancouver City Hall Project: British Columbia" (Gary

Pharness); "Workbase: London, England" (Lucy Bonnerjea); "Instructor Certification Scheme: England and Wales" (Judith Banbury); "Legitimizing Practitioners' Skills and Worth" (Serge Wagner); "Moving On: From Learner to Teacher" (Elsa Auerbach); "Tracking the Process: Tracking Report" (Richard Darville); "Summarizing the Process" (Joyce Cameron et al.). Conference evaluations and a follow-up are appended. (YLB)

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LITERACY 2000:
CONFERENCE SUMMARY

Literacy 2000:
Make the Next Ten Years Matter
an International Conference held at
Douglas College
New Westminster, B.C.
October 18 - 21, 1990

FROM READING AND WRITING FUNDAMENTALS TO VOCATIONAL AND COLLEGE ENTRY.

FROM CONFIDENT FUNCTIONING IN A CULTURE TO EFFECTIVE UNDERSTANDING AND USE OF INFORMATION IN A MODERN WORLD.

Conference Planning Committee:	Gillies Malnarich Joyce Cameron Catherine Bissett
Conference Sponsors:	Province of British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology
	Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada, National Literacy Secretariat
	Douglas College

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PREFACE

Well before **LITERACY 2000: MAKE THE NEXT TEN YEARS MATTER** happened, we described this conference as a place where innovative research, practise, and program models would be highlighted. We wanted to organize a forum for the people behind many of the initiatives sparked (and funded) by the occasion of UNESCO's International Literacy Year. By directing our collective attention toward the next ten years, we chose to see 1990 as a moment not ony for celebration but for change. This is why we wanted **LITERACY 2000** to be issue-oriented ... an opportunity for promoting debate and discussion.

This same focus has been followed in preparing the conference report. Workshop descriptions, which reflect questions currently raised in the adult basic education field, are reproduced from the original conference catalogue. Workshop facilitators' notes have been summarized. Presentations made at plenary sessions by the key-note speaker, panelists, and tracker are also included. You will find that participants' comments, taken from response cards filled out during **LITERACY 2000**, are quoted throughout. But most of what you will read are papers written by conference presenters specifically for this publication. These have been edited for length and clarity.

Many of you wanted us to describe the conference design, particularly the tracking process, so a critique has been included with recommendations for ways to improve this 'experiment'. As well, we report on initiatives which are a direct outcome of the conference. While we cannot trace the various changes in individuals' thinking and practise which undoubtedly occur when people meet together at conferences, these changes are no less significant than an organization's efforts.

That **LITERACY 2000** has been a catalyst for future cooperative endeavors and the organization of working-groups who are beginning to address issues in depth, pleases us greatly. This, after all, was our intent.

Any report of an event risks becoming an artefact, even before it is published. Despite this limitation, we hope you will find the contents useful. Material has been organized by theme for easier reference.

Gillies Malnarich
Joyce Cameron
Catherine Bissett

LITERACY 2000: CONFERENCE SUMMARY

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OPENING PLENARY

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PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES

OPENING PLENARY

WITH INTERNATIONAL LITERACY YEAR DRAWING TO AN END, LITERACY ISSUES HAVE BEEN PLACED HIGH ON THE AGENDA IN MANY COUNTRIES. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY LITERACY AND WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE COMING DECADE? THESE QUESTIONS WERE DISCUSSED IN A KEYNOTE SPEECH, PANELIST PRESENTATIONS, AND OPEN DEBATE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CONFERENCE.

John Ryan

What is Literacy?: Critical Issues for the Next Decade

This conference is most timely and addresses the question which is in all of our minds: what next? In Canada, as in many countries around the world, International Literacy Year has been put to good use. The year was recognized as an occasion to place literacy issues high on the national agenda and this opportunity has been seized with energy, skill and conviction. Nearly every day during my brief stay in Canada the newspapers that miraculously appeared under hotel doors in the middle of the night brought reports, comments and editorials on literacy. In an article which appeared yesterday in the Globe and Mail, Susan Kellman speaks of an "edge of desperation" concerning literacy and cites a Statistics Canada report estimating that 38 percent of the Canadian population has difficulties, of greater or lesser degree, in reading printed materials encountered in daily life. I will not seek to interpret this statistic. The debate on that is already under way. But I will unhesitatingly interpret this story, and many others like it which I have seen, as persuasive evidence that you are doing your job well. Thanks to your efforts, literacy has 'come out of the closet' and is increasingly perceived as a problem which concerns the society as a whole – not merely the illiterates and those relatively few people who work with them. This is decisive progress! But it makes even more urgent the issue we are gathered here to discuss and debate. Where do we go from here? How can we make the next ten years count?

We, as educators, have insisted repeatedly and rightly that education is the force of the future, the way of enabling societies to adjust to changes and transformation. If we are right and have been understood rightly, literacy and education should be perceived as rainy-weather gear, as protection in inclement economic times. As the economic storm clouds gathering ominously on the horizon move overhead, governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector should all raise their literacy umbrellas for shelter. But will this happen or will education for the most vulnerable sectors of the population be the first victim of austerity? We may not, alas, have long to wait before we learn the answer to that question.

The precedents are not happy ones. The response to a persisting economic crisis in the developing nations has been externally imposed cuts in social expenditures, affecting education with particular severity. Societies in which millions of children are without teachers or schools have been told to cut back their education budgets if they wish to receive additional international loans. If the industrialized countries are going to prescribe the same medicine at home that they have recommended abroad, we could find ourselves moving from mobilization to demobilization with only a few indecisive scrimmages in between. But this is not a fatality – a matter utterly beyond our control – but rather an issue on which society must make a decision. And our Conference is important precisely because it can have an influence on that decision. It is our responsibility as literacy workers and educators to provide compelling arguments as to why literacy is important which, put differently and more starkly, is really about why the illiterate and the semi-literate are important, and why they need and deserve educational services to make their lives easier, more fulfilling and more rewarding.

What is Literacy?

The organizers of Literacy 2000 have suggested I begin by confronting a very fundamental question: what is literacy? Is that the same question as: what do you mean by literacy? What we mean by literacy is evidently enormously diverse and becoming more so every day. There is simple *garden variety literacy*. Then, there is a hybrid called *functional literacy*. And there are also many rarer species such as *computer literacy, social literacy, cultural literacy* and *economic literacy.* As a consequence, there are also *economic illiterates*, an endearing term that politicians enjoy applying to one another. With the growing tragedy of AIDS, one hears more and more about *sexual literates* and, especially, *sexual illiterates*, the latter being in greater peril these days than ever before. In short, *literacy* is very á la mode and, inevitably, with use has come abuse and confusion.

Through a sort of Gresham's law, *literacy* is driving out broader terms such as education, socialization and ability to cope as well as narrower ones describing the component parts of literacy such as reading, writing and mastery of vocabulary. Nowadays, if we identify a problem, we almost instantaneously identify a *literacy* to handle it. If our front yards, for example, become chocked with crab-grass, before very long we may find ourselves talking about *herbicide literacy.* The danger in such loose usage is not that concepts and terminology become corrupted or diluted, but that what should clearly be our main concern – people in need of basic educational services – may be lost track of and neglected.

The UNESCO definition of literacy dates back to the 1950's although it has been given a few minor retouches since. It is a sensible and intuitive definition:

> "a person is literate who can with understanding read and write a short statement on his everyday life."

At the time this was adopted, it was considered quite a rigorous definition. It excluded, for example, those who could merely sign their names – the measure of literacy used in the Common Law – as well as those who could 'read' but were oblivious to what they were reading. Thus, people trained and even expert in recitation, but not understanding, of holy scripture fell outside the literacy category. On the other hand, the definition was inclusive in that literacy could be achieved in any language or any orthography. In the operationalization of this definition, both its rigour and its inclusiveness have suffered. Census-takers usually measure literacy on a self-report basis in response, for example, to a question such as "Are you able to read?", or on the basis of information provided by the head of the household or whoever else may be home when the enumerator visits. Or, in other cases, literacy status is inferred from the number of years of schooling reported, on the assumption that X-years of schooling – four, six, eight or more years depending on the country – no matter when, where or how undertaken, confers 'literacy'. There are obvious pitfalls in such approaches. Reported literacy may not correspond to actual literacy; years of schooling, even if we were able to agree upon the needed dosage, are evidently a rubber yardstick as students derive very different values from their exposure to school depending upon preparation, family background, home langauge and countless other factors.

The overall impact is probably to exaggerate the extent of literacy and minimize that of illiteracy. Yet, in some countries there are factors that tend in the opposite direction. Literacy, for example, may be operationally defined as ability to read an *official* language. In a number of western African countries, the restriction is even more severe in that the *official* language must be read in the Latin script. People who read the 'wrong' language or even the 'right' language in the 'wrong' orthography – usually the Arabic script – may find themselves counted among the illiterate. There is also an interesting problem of non-alphabetic orthographies. The Chinese, for example, measure literacy as the ability to recognize 2000 characters if one lives in an urban area, and 1500 if one resides in rural regions. As meaning in idiographic languages is embedded in the characters – in a way in which it is not in alphabets, which are merely intermediaries – this seems a quite sensible definition.

Given the prevailing problems with both the definition and measurement of literacy, the best advice to potential users of literacy statistics may be *caveat emptor*, let the buyer beware. Some uses are, of course, more appropriate and less perilous than others. Statistics deriving from the same census can usually be compared with greater confidence than longitudinal data, as both the collection procedures and the rigour with which they are applied differ from one time period to another. Cross-national comparisons are especially hazardous. One cannot be certain if reported differences reflect differing realities or are artifacts of the definition applied or the procedures employed. Numerous initiatives have been taken in recent years to improve literacy statistics, but it will be some time before these bear fruit. One technique of particular interest is the household survey of a sample of the population. This not only provides a test of the reliability of census data, but also permits a fuller picture of the realities of which literacy and illiteracy are a part. Through such surveys one can, for example, determine what is the home language, the language (or languages) of literacy, how literacy skills were acquired, and who in the household are the literates, the children or the adults? One can thus infer whether literacy is diffused from parents to children, as the advocates of intergenerational literacy strategies insist, or whether it is something children carry home from school.

Definitions of literacy are numerous and could doubtless be discussed – inconclusively – until the end of this Conference to the exclusion of more important matters. But that would be a most unwise allocation of our

> "Are there other ways of knowing, imagining, besides literacy? Kazemek, like Smith and others, particularly those involved in writing, suggests that literacy allows people to imagine, create, etc. What does that say about culture and individuals who do not rely on literacy? Does emphasizing literacy (and literacy-shaped oral language exchanges) limit our ways of knowing?"
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

attention. The point to remember is, I think, that definitions are not right or wrong; they are fruitful or fruitless or, more commonly, some place in between. Definition is not an end in itself, but a means for taking hold of slippery realities in order to be able to use them for policy or research purposes. There are only two points I would wish to make on this subject before passing on to address the issues that will confront us in the 1990's. First, it is evident that literacy in its classical sense – an elementary mastery of two of the three R's, reading and writing – is not the literacy that counts economically, socially or culturally. The literacy which is economically relevant, for example, is increasingly complex. It requires not only the ability to read and understand standard text, but also to handle numbers, graphics, visual information and much more. Even this may not suffice, as success on most jobs is not determined mainly by cognitive functioning, but by commitment, ability to work with others and mastery of the sub-culture of a particular workplace.

UNESCO's definition of *functional literacy*, which dates from 1978, was an attempt to come to terms with the growing gap between so-called basic literacy and the literacy that matters in complex living and working environments encountered in industrialized countries and, increasingly, in the developing world as well. Functional literacy is defined as the ability:

> "to engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of one's group and community and also for enabling one to use reading, writing and calculation for one's own and the community's development".

This, as you will observe, is a higher, broader and *relative* definition of literacy. Under this definition, literacy is not measured in absolute terms, but in relationship to the exigencies of life in particular situations or settings. Implicit in this definition is the notion that there are not only many degrees of literacy, but also many kinds of literacy: social literacies, cultural literacies and economic literacies, to name but a few.

In fact, the fundamental conceptual difficulty at the root of the problem of definition is that literacy is a *continuum* which we have chosen to measure as a *dichotomy*. Literacy for an English-speaker, runs from zero to Shakespeare. Hence, where to draw the frontiers between *literacy* and *illiteracy* is inherently arbitrary and problematic. In fact, as has been noted, the problem is even more complex because literacy is multifaceted rather than one-dimensional. One may, for example, be able to master a cookbook with ease, but be unable to comprehend a statistics text or vice versa. It is for this reason that recent attempts to measure literacy, particularly in Canada and the United States, have focused *not* upon defining, but upon plotting or describing competencies: indicating, for example, what part of the population can handle everyday reading and writing tasks such as filling out postal forms or reading directions on a pay telephone. Such measures provide a far more differentiated and informative measurement of literacy skills than do efforts to draw a dividing line between the literate and the illiterate. In addition, such efforts link the island of literacy to the mainland of education by emphasizing the continuity of the educational process rather than constructing arbitrary classifications and artificial barriers.

Indeed, the insights deriving from more than a generation of research in psychology show that literacy is and must be knowledge-driven. The former notion of reading as passive decoding has given way to empirical findings that skillful reading is an active and multifaceted search for meaning rather than a mere deciphering of text. The good reader does not recognize the words by their letters; he or she identifies or deduces them from their contribution to the meaning of the passage. Fluent reading depends upon a backdrop of knowledge: the facts, figures, concepts and allusions that are the currency of discussion in society. Thus, the relationship between literacy and the broader concept of education is reciprocal. Literacy is a means of gaining knowledge, but the knowledge gained through education and experience, in turn, empower reading. Consequently, definitions of literacy as an autonomous skill are mistaken and misleading. Knowledge of the 'mechanics of reading' is only one of many skills used to wring meaning from a text. The truth of this assertion was impressed upon me some weeks ago when I purchased an inexpensive travel alarm made in the Orient and attempted to set it using the directions provided. To my chagrin I discovered that, while I knew all the words, I still did not possess *alarm clock literacy:* the knowledge of what those words meant in a very particular operational context.

What are the implications of this discussion? First, I think that what we are subsuming under the terms *literacy* and *illiteracy* are educational abilities or deficiencies of a very extensive and complex nature. We may all understand this, but the world of policy-makers and politicians to whom we address ourselves may not. It is possible, if you are of an optimistic nature and not overly informed, to believe that there may be a quick fix to the literacy problem, but few people would suppose that there could be a fast or cheap solution to a fundamental educational problem which is, in fact, what we are confronting. Meaningful literacy requires not only knowledge of an alphabet, but also a wide array of other knowledge and skills. Hence, we must not give the impression that quick and easy victories are to be expected and, if others do so, we should politely, but quickly, correct them.

Progress is certainly possible – and indeed, is being achieved – but it calls for persistence and the investment of adequate resources over an extended period of time. The road to a literate society is a long and demanding one and we must not deceive ourselves nor deceive anyone else regarding this basic truth. There are no shortcuts. We must cease to imagine that there is a frontier marked 'Literacy' and that once we have shoved people beyond it we can forget them. Literacy is an ill-defined territory on the road of life-long education. Those at the start of the journey may encounter the greatest difficulties and require the most help, but all along the route, society has a duty and an interest to serve by offering a helping hand.

Issues for the 1990's

What are the issues that will confront us in the 90's? Evidently, they are many, but I shall touch on only a very few. In the developing nations, a fundamental question is: After literacy what?. What *should* be is set forth very succinctly in the sub-title of this Conference:

> "from reading and writing fundamentals to vocational and college entry; from confident functioning in a culture to effective understanding and use of information in a modern world".

> " How do we distinguish literacy work from social work?
>
> ...
>
> The reiteration by each of the panelists of the particular, gender referenced, contextual nature of literacy leads to concern over three issues: the emphasis on workplace literacy (ie. meeting corporate capitalism's needs!), creeping misuse of quick-fix computer programs; and development of more understanding of women's ways of knowing. "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

This may be a realistic aspiration in British Columbia but, sadly, it is a far-fetched dream for much of the debt-ridden and impoverished developing world where there is likely to be little to read, especially in national languages, and very little, if any, institutional support to help in pursuing vocational or career goals. Yet, as the number of literate and semi-literate youth rapidly expands, the need for follow-up materials – for newspapers, magazines and books of many kinds – grows accordingly. If an appropriate response is not forthcoming, past successes in making people literate may begin to count against us. This issue is urgent. Indeed, the most important lesson I would draw from an examination of UNESCO's experience of more than 40 years of literacy work in the developing nations is that relatively less should be done to teach literacy and a good deal more done to make literacy a useful and rewarding skill to possess. It is by working on the demand side of the equation that the best and least costly results will be obtained and the most serious disappointments avoided. Already, there is some evidence in the poorest countries that not only is the provision of education dropping, but demand for it is also declining. Parents, living on the edge of survival, do not wish to sacrifice the benefits the family derives from the work of a child for the uncertain gains which may come from education gained in a tumble-down school with few furnishings or learning material, where an ill-prepared and irregularly paid teacher copes with a class of sixty students or more. This is an alarm bell signalling a problem we must not ignore.

But that is only part of the problem. The more fundamental truth is that to motivate adults to seek literacy – for themselves or their children – they must be convinced that tomorrow will *not* be only another yesterday. To commit their time to education, they must believe that tomorrow will bring new opportunities and that literacy will help them to seize these. This, I suspect, is as true in Canada as it is in the developing world. Your clients, I am certain, appreciate a well-conducted programme, but what counts most is not what happens in the classroom or tutoring centre, but what comes after and as a result of it in their lives. Does literacy make their lives fuller and more meaningful?

One answer to this problem – which one encounters constantly all across Canada and in many other countries as well – is *workplace literacy*. Is it a good idea? Perhaps. UNESCO's experience with work-oriented functional literacy in the 1960's could be instructive here. In some instances, this programme worked very well; in others, it failed miserably. But even where it succeeded it often did so in unexpected ways and for unanticipated reasons. The theory of work-oriented literacy was simple: the trainee was to master a vocational skill in conjunction with literacy instruction; this would enable him to increase his productivity; his income would rise; national output would increase and, by and by, there would be pie in the sky. The reality was evidently far more complex. First, in most countries, the majority of those expressing an interest in literacy training consisted not of *he's* but of *she's*. Curiously, while these women worked twelve or more hours a day, seven days per week, they were not considered part of the active labour force and consequently were not included in the initial target population. This was a discrepancy which was so glaring that it could not be overlooked. Hence, the programme implementers in most countries sought to mend this oversight with a few sewing machines – the classic remedy until quite recently, even though women in most regions of the developing world often play a prominent role in food production and commerce.

Yet, even for the target audience, men between the ages of 15 and 35 years, there were serious misconceptions and problems. An essential difficulty was an incompatibility of goals. The learners had one set of purposes, the programme organizers a second and the employers, in whose premises the courses usually took place, a third. In countries with rapid economic growth, the aim of those being trained in agriculture was to get out of the country-side and into the city. They wanted literacy and swallowed the agricultural training – which incidentally represented the major part of the programme cost – to get it. Increased agricultural productivity brought few benefits to rural youth without land. In the urban programmes the employee's goal was often to move up in or, even more commonly, to move out of the occupation in which he was being trained. The employer, on the other hand, assumed that the employee would continue to do the same job, but perhaps do it a little better. In Canada, the situation is evidently different, but have you found ways to reconcile conflicting expectations? Does literacy enable one to do a menial job better? And, if the employer's goal is to reduce turnover, which it often is, what is the employee's? Progress? Escape? The assessment of the Experimental World Literacy Programme and the work-oriented literacy it provided might be summed up in one Biblical phrase: "Not by bread alone does man live". Literacy must be functional to life, not merely to work. Workplace literacy may be an excellent idea in many settings, but it is not a panacea. It may work well where literacy training is instrumental to performing new functions *and* where the incentives to perform such jobs are appealing to the trainees. Where employers and employees have different or conflicting motivations and expectations, time will expose these. Hence, two cheers for workplace literacy. Such programmes may have great merit but it would not be prudent to place all our eggs in the workplace literacy basket. Not all employees will wish to identify themselves more closely with their menial jobs or to make a demeaning place of work their chosen place of learning. As educators, we have a duty and obligation to ensure that literacy is not designed merely to fit individuals into jobs. Education, by any meaningful definition, must offer not only training in particular skills, but an opportunity to develop one's full human potential – one's knowledge, values, talents and imagination.

Another key area where we must succeed in the 1990's is reducing the gender gap in education. In most developing countries this is the crux of the literacy problem. Universal primary education – the most effective means of preventing illiteracy – will, for example, be achieved by the year 2000 in most Asian states for boys. But there will still be millions of girls without primary education. There are evidently complex socio-cultural reasons for this situation, but it needs to be corrected. Nearly two-thirds of the world's illiterates are women, yet, in most cultures women play the decisive role in transmitting culture from one generation to another. We must recognize that a literate world will remain beyond our grasp until we make decisive progress in closing the gender gap.

There is an urgent need for better understanding of a wide range of language and cultural issues. In many developing countries, where linguistic research has been limited, there is a need for what one might term *objective* work – that is, for the study of linguistic structures, lexicons and orthographies. Where this has been accomplished, we need more *subjective* studies aimed at determining the affective orientation of speakers to their own and other languages. In much of the world literacy can proceed only slowly, if at all, until language decisions are made by

> "
>
> We must not allow literacy to become a non-issue after this year.
>
> ...
>
> Where are the people from Newfoundland and Nova Scotia? We're the winners of the Statistical Illiteracy Award with Newfoundland having 44% functional illiteracy.
>
> "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

policy or settled in the court of popular usage. Literacy work can be done in many ways, but it cannot be done without a medium, a language, and preferably one of sufficiently wide usage to make the printing of newspapers and books economically feasible.

There are doubtless some habits we developed in the 1980's which we would be well advised to change in the 1990's. We have tended, I think, to argue too strongly for literacy as a means for achieving something else and not nearly enough for literacy as an end in itself. We speak of literacy as a means for employment, empowerment, integration into the community, access, etc. These are good and correct arguments, but they put us in the position of constantly having to prove our case in economic or social terms. Can we really prove that an investment in literacy will yield a higher rate of return than a new dam or a new road? And, even if we could, is that the argument we should be making? The ultimate argument for literacy is that it is a human right. We do not conduct literacy programmes because they are 'profitable'; we conduct them because we care about the well-being of our fellow citizens and wish them to enjoy, as we ourselves do, the right to education guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Another issue we have to consider is the future of literacy in a world in which the audio-visual culture occupies a more and more central place. Are we to surrender and put our libraries into mothballs or can we rekindle the love of reading? This, I think, will not prove as impossible as it may sound if we put our imaginations to the task. Our libraries have vastly more to offer than do our monotonous television networks. Probably no task is as central for our civilization as to escape from the poverty of mass culture and re-emphasize the role of the individual in all aspects of public and private life.

Lastly, we will have to remember that the progress of literacy will be determined, very largely, by the nature and evolution of society. If literacy gives access to meaningful social, cultural, economic, spiritual or personal development, it will be strongly sought. If it does not – because of constraints, poverty or other reasons – it will wither. The key to a literate world is not to be found in the schoolhouse but in the conscience of our societies. Our schools and other institutions express our priorities and values; they tell the truth about us. If we don't like what we are hearing we can always improve the schools, but we can do so only by transforming ourselves and the value we place on education. For, in the final analysis, the most literate societies are those that love reading most and value education most highly.

In conclusion, I should like, on behalf of UNESCO, to thank the organizers of this Conference for a splendid and timely contribution to the cause of literacy in this International Literacy Year.

Francis Kazemek

The great English poet, William Blake once observed, "To Generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit. General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess". We may take exception to Blake's own over-generalization, but we cannot ignore its underlying significance. Scholars from a wide range of disciplines are acknowledging the importance of the particular, the contextual. Feminist researchers and authors such as Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings and Sara Ruddick, for example, have shown us how morality for many women is constructed in specific contexts and dependent upon particular relationships and particular frames of reference. Maxine Greene, the noted educational philosopher, observes that "Human consciousness... is always situated".

When we discuss definitions of literacy and illiteracy it is all too easy to generalize and engage in the kind of abstractions and idiotic statements that we see and hear in the media, from politicians and from representatives of the corporate world. It is much too easy to label people as being readers who can read only at some abstract and theoretically meaningless 3.5 or 2.0 'grade level'. Thus, it is vitally important that we always keep the particular before us.

Literacy is a personal, social, cultural, contextual, gender-related and constructive process whereby a particular individual builds meaning with a particular text depending upon her particular purposes for reading and writing. It is, first and foremost, an end in itself although it may also serve as a means to other ends.

Literacy involves the use of print across a range of functions, from using language to enjoy ourselves, express our feelings and opinions, establish relationships, explore ideas, satisfy our needs, convey information, and imagine alternative worlds. It is not, and I repeat, it is not merely some set of generalized, limited, and limiting 'basic skills' which will permit us to perform acceptably in some systematized world.

The ultimate value of literacy is that it offers us the opportunity to imagine and explore alternative perspectives, multiple interpretations, and different (hopefully better) selves and society as we engage in and share texts with others.

Definitions of literacy which ignore its complexity and particularity usually also ignore the complexity and, ultimately, dignity of adults themselves. Definitions which revolve primarily around *functional skills* and *workplace literacy skills* are based on the assumption that adults have no personal, emotional, imaginative, social and cultural lives of any import, as if they are little more than functionaries within the world of corporate capitalism.

And that, to me, is the crucial issue facing literacy education, for both adults and children, during the next ten years. Will the current, and dramatic, clamour from government and the corporate world result in a literacy education that is impoverished and restricted to performance with a narrow range of texts within a narrow range of situations? Will it amount to little more than training, not educating, adults to meet the varying and changing demands of business and the marketplace, a process of accommodation whereby adults are trained to advance the 'economic competitiveness' of their society?

Or will literacy education foster an exploration of the many different functions and uses of language among adults? Will it seek to promote a wider and more equitable distribution of knowledge? Will it nurture freedom, as Maxine Greene contends, by contributing to the opening of personal and social spaces and multiple perspectives? Will it recognize the primary importance of the imagination and imaginative texts in the opening of such spaces?

Literacy for accommodation to the world as it is, or literacy for a myriad number of particular texts, purposes and situations – that is the issue we must confront during the next decade.

PANELIST PRESENTATION

Lorraine Fox

I am here representing a somewhat different community than a lot of my colleagues. I am involved in literacy work with native people and sometimes I feel quite overwhelmed with this job and this responsibility. In Vancouver my centre is one of the only centres which offers this kind of program to 100% population of native people. Of course I am very happy to be doing my part to help our people but much more has to be done, and it has to be done very soon.

I see that one of the most important points for our people is for them to return to school and stay in school. In Canada native people have the highest rate of illiteracy in the country. This is manifested in high unemployment rates, socio-economic problems and all manner of other problems which are associated with illiteracy and under-education. Approximately two thirds of Canadian Indians over the age of 15 and out of school have less than a grade 9 education, which is 2.5 times higher than the national average. Statistics indicate that 83% of all native students leave school before reaching high school. In the next ten years I hope to be involved in putting together a national literacy plan for native people in Canada. As you know, many native people do not live in an open society, they live on reserves. Their needs are much different than the needs of learners in urban areas. It is very important to me that we have a firm plan of action, which accounts for this difference, for the government and the authorities to follow in native education so that we can make some real strides in the educating of our people.

In the past there has been plenty of talk and there have been plenty of studies but this does nothing to make an illiterate person literate. While I am involved in developing a national literacy plan what has become clear to me and to many of my colleagues is that a great barrier to our programs is funding and the allocation of that funding. At present, funding is there but it is distributed to all native peoples who live on reserves and in native communities, and they are told what sort of programs they have to follow in their communities and, of course, we all know that just doesn't work in every community. You can't have a sort of blanket plan for everyone. So, we are asking in our aboriginal plan that funding allocations be directly handled by native people in individual communities to implement programs that are relevant to their needs. We feel that literacy and education is not a privilege, but it is a right.

Another important factor in building native literacy programs is to have native culture built into those programs and the curriculum – to use native culture in the contemporary sense and in the traditional sense. This should be at the centre of all subjects. As well, we need more native personnel involved in these programs. We need guest speakers; we need directors of Indian Bands; we most especially need more native teachers and aides.

Another part of my program is involving the community and volunteer tutors and helpers. I get a very good response from the Vancouver community to my needs for assistance. We try to, or we would like to have, native tutors in these situations but at present that just isn't possible. Of course, this relates back to the high rates of illiteracy for native people in our country. So I am just going to plug right now my volunteer tutors from the community and thank them very much for their assistance.

A problem that I see is that so much of the work has now fallen on the shoulders of volunteer people because there aren't qualified people available. I think that another important part of moving ahead with literacy is to have people specifically trained to work in literacy programs whether with native people or non-native people.

As my colleagues have said, it is very difficult to give a definition of literacy. For my people it isn't strictly directed towards getting a job because many people want to have literacy skills for simple everyday needs such as reading to their children, reading the newspaper, or being able to go to bingo and sit there and play with the rest of their friends. Things that we take for granted every single day are very difficult and very depressing for these people. Native people who live in the urban areas and are illiterate face a great sense of terror having to operate in an environment which is very foreign to them and without the skills to serve their daily needs. So in the next ten years I will be working along with my native colleagues across the country to establish definite and concise programming for native people because as it is right now such programming is lacking. I feel that is what we need in order to get a firm footing for our native people and thereby benefit the rest of our fellow Canadians.

Joyce White

In discussion with our learners I've been given this definition of literacy: the ability to read and write well enough so they can access and use information encountered in work, at home and in their community.

This parallels the definition in the latest Statistics Canada *Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities* ("The information processing skills necessary to use the printed materials commonly encountered at work, at home and in the community"). According to the survey, 38% (6.9 million) between the ages of 16 and 69 cannot read or write or have so much difficulty coping with unfamiliar complex reading matter, they tend to avoid such situations.

There seems to be a strong relationship between levels of education and literacy. According to the survey, high school completion is the key to everyday reading skills. Given this correlation, one of the major tasks over the next decade will be to address the needs of young people so that we can convince them to stay in school. If we look at Ontario we see an improvement in high school completion (e.g. Ontario 1966 – 30% of 18 year olds completed high school; 1986 – 74%). However, this should not be confused with equality of opportunity. In reality, those at the head of the field and who are part of a large core of people where performance is continuing to improve, are moving further and further ahead of a large mass of people who have dropped out of the school system or are likely to do so (1/3 of Ontario high school kids drop out before completion).

Frank Smith suggests that we are subtly operating a kind of literacy club. Some people are welcomed into that club and they become acceptably literate. But some people feel, almost from the point they enter school, that they are never going to be part of that club. Often these children are part of a family who is experiencing some difficulty, economically, educationally, socially, and/or politically.

Having said that, I don't want to blame parents. We have to be careful not to feed into the current idea that there is a raging epidemic – the intergenerational cycle of illiteracy – and that this can only be cured by enlightened social intervention which transforms parental behaviour, skills and attitudes (Elsa Auerbach, *Making Meaning Making Change*). The danger of such an analysis is that it will drive away the very people it is designed to support because they feel ashamed, victimized and isolated due to the distorted image portrayed by the well intentioned media campaigns.

Most of the people classed as illiterate are possibly undereducated, but most are in fact functioning in their families, communities and their employment. So, by making a commitment to adult literacy programs which allows adult members to work independently on their own literacy, we will be indirectly contributing to family literacy which in turn will have a profound payoff in children's literacy achievement.

And so we must reaffirm in the next decade that the education of youths and adults is truly a human right and a social responsibility. We welcome the skills and commitment that the private sector, voluntary agencies and community groups can contribute, however, leadership and major financial commitment for ongoing program funding must come from both levels of government.

Literacy is often seen as a prerequisite for economic and social development, however, we must not present literacy as a panacea. To advertise literacy programs to the disadvantaged as the cure-all to their social and economic isolation is false.

The reason more people are unemployed today isn't simply because they have literacy problems; it's because there aren't enough jobs to go around.

I began this presentation by stating that 38% of adults have difficulty with unfamiliar written material and tend to avoid these situations. Yet only 2% of potential learners attend programs. Why? Because there are situational barriers which confront adult learners across the spectrum of ABE education. If Canada truly believes that we need a literate populace, then free programming is not enough.

The next decade must be devoted to removing these barriers. To do this we will have to make a commitment:

- to social and economic justice;
- to redistribution of wealth through taxes, guaranteed income, paid educational leave and progressive social programs;
- to creating family support programs, day care, and early childhood education;
- to adequate community services and social networks.

Until our federal and provincial governments make such commitments, it will be nearly impossible for any of the 6.9 million adults who have difficulty coping with reading and writing in our society today to take advantage of, or see any reason to take advantage of, literacy programs.

Robin Silverman

In 1987 I saw the inside of a boardroom for my first time. I was at the Toronto Board of Education and I met there with other learners from Board and community programs to begin work on a learners' conference. That first night in the boardroom I looked for a way out about fifty times. I didn't want to be there. The only person I could relate to was a woman who was serving the dinner to us. One of the workers came in and for the first time started talking about *illiterate* people and people who are *functionally illiterate.* I had never heard these terms before. What she said about illiterate people was that they don't read and write at all. I said,"Thank god that's not me. Who are these poor people?" Then she defined *functionally illiterate* people. She said they are people who read and write but don't do it to a grade nine level. I thought, "I'd better keep my mouth shut or they'll find out." When I heard those labels I struggled for about a year or a year and a half longer wondering if they really do mean me.

I worked mostly in restaurants during my teen years and my early twenties but I could never spell the word 'restaurant'. I had a child and I was a single parent. We lived in poverty and isolation and I couldn't break out of it. But I could read and I could write but not well enough to get the jobs that I needed to get to break through the poverty and through the isolation. So I defined *functional illiteracy* as not being able to do the things that I wanted to do. And I want it defined by the individuals who struggle with this issue in a way that they need to define it for themselves. I don't want a mass definition for the term *illiterate.* And in fact, I don't want the terms *illiterate* or *functional illiterate.* They're very negative.

Through my work with the Movement for Canadian Literacy - my work and many other people's work – in May in Saskatchewan we had a national event. It was a national training event for learners. Learners came from across this country. Learners came from other parts of the world – from Africa, from St. Vincent and from the United States. When we held the training event we called it a 'training event' specifically so we wouldn't call it a 'conference' – it wasn't going to be another conference. It was going to be a training event – something that was geared to train students in the skills that are usually denied to them and only given to workers. Out of that came a Mission Statement that was given to the Learner Action Group of Canada, an MCL committee, by the students who were there from across this country. This is what they have mandated us to do. I am going to read it to you because I think this is what has to happen in the literacy movement over the next decade.

Mission Statement of the Learner Action Group of Canada

This mission statement is intended to lay the foundation of strengthening the adult student/learner voice.

Within Canadian society:

that literacy as a right be stated in the Charter of Rights;

that there is a right to education for all;

that all student/learners should be consulted on how to improve the education of children;

that the term 'illiterate' not be used in reference to any citizen or group of citizens;

that the dignity of the adult student/learners be preserved.

Within the literacy movement:

that the current one-on-one partnership for adult student /learner (or former learner) involvement be extended by 1995 to include all levels of literacy organizations — including programs, boards and networks — to ensure that we get the most out of what is available to help the largest number of people. This is to include representation on executive, personnel and finance committees, etc.;

that programs build in financial and moral support to adult student/learners who want to be involved;

that qualified adult student/learners be equally considered when paid literacy positions become available;

that adult student/learners and literacy workers exchange information about conferences and meetings;

that all literacy funding proposals allow for adult student/learner involvement;

that clear language be used in funding proposals;

that adult student/learner rights concerning confidentiality be respected.

Now we know that some of this is already happening to some degree in programs or in networks but we know that it's a long way before we are really there. This is a *people's* movement. The literacy movement is *not* a movement that belongs to people with an education. It is a movement that is to be *shared* with people who are struggling to get one. We have laid out in our Statement that we want some of this to happen by the year 1995 – so in fact we have half a decade to implement the wishes of the learners in this country. Thank you.

... FROM PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSE CARDS

JOHN RYAN'S KEYNOTE ADDRESS AND THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY THE PANELISTS LED TO DIVERSE COMMENTS ON MANY ISSUES FROM PARTICIPANTS.

Literacy as a Human Right :

Many noted how good it feels to talk of literacy as a human right, up front, out loud, no longer relegated to the hidden agenda behind economic arguments.

"I cannot envision how this can come about unless we become a 'socialistic society' and this scares me somewhat! (LOTS!)

...

It is important – no, essential – for literacy to be a human right.

...

Must go beyond the 'media moment', beyond the economic payoff towards a human right – which may be too dangerous for both the developed and developing countries to accept.

...

If literacy is a right, then the way we provide literacy programs must reflect that by making them more available. I would like to see no fees for adult upgrading to the grade 12 level. We must treat people as unique and must address their spiritual needs to become. People are not just workers who function in a utilitarian way.

...

Literacy is an enabling right. Concentrating on it as a 'right' did not get the movement very far. The links to the economic arguments helped bring literacy to the Canadian agenda. Glad to see economic reasons for literacy programs being challenged. Literacy as a human right must be empha-sized and is closely allied with the need for social and economic change for justice.

...

Not everyone can/will become literate. What are our responsibilities to provide better supports for non-literate people or those with low literacy skills?"

... from Participants' Response Cards

Valuing Lifelong Learning ...

Participants generally agreed that education must be available to all to meet individual needs and desires as a part of everyday life. Our society must come to value literacy for its life enriching qualities.

"

How can we reaffirm or establish a commitment to lifelong learning?

...

Society's value of educators must change. If society at large has little respect for educators, how will students feel?

...

What is the future of text and reading?...What is the value of reading?...

...

John Ryan is dead-on when he speculates that the success of the development of literacy over the next ten years will be closely tied to the degree to which our society as a whole values reading.

...

Need to shift from seeing literacy as a programming or funding issue to an evolution in our society's valuing of an educated/literate population.

...

We are part of a rapidly evolving and changing context. Education must be available to all – at the time we want it – be a part of everyday life. We must move away from the idea that the K-12 system is 'preventative' and adult education at that level is 'remedial'.

...

I was pleased to hear about the need for the development of language and appreciation of language. This aspect is often overlooked by the social activist perspective – the need to make reading a valuable skill to possess, an end in itself. Must rekindle the joy of reading just as we must rekindle the joy of learning.

...

Literacy is more complex than simply political enfranchisement. Literacy allows individuals and society to IMAGINE and explore alternatives to the status quo.

...

We need more political/economic analysis of the forces that are working against a learned population. "

... from Participants' Response Cards

Literacy and Social Justice ...

There was general agreement that literacy is not a 'solution' isolated from addressing issues like poverty, housing, working conditions, racism, and sexism.

"Literacy is integrally tied to social/economic justice. Literacy is connected with issues like the right to meaningful work, income, housing, working conditions.

...

Illiteracy must be addressed by an attitude of strengthening our society – protecting all citizens especially the most vulnerable from the threats of economic, personal and social dangers.

...

Must keep reasserting broad definitions and get literacy embedded in social justice issues. Build active coalitions with anti-poverty and other social justice movements.

...

Job shortages are not due to illiteracy. Students who learn to read and write have a right to expect employment. What are we preparing them for?

...

Racism has not been sufficiently addressed yet.

...

Literacy is becoming institutionalized, bureaucratized. Its teeth are falling out. Poverty is being ignored."

... from Participants' Response Cards

Cultural Context of Literacy ...

Many emphasized that curriculum and program formats should be developed to include and value various cultural contexts. The definition and process for developing literacy are culturally-based.

"

Must clarify the needs, objectives and limitations of literacy in a cultural context.

...

Is literacy so much a product of economic, social and political issues that we're all in the wrong business?

...

Literacy is knowledge driven. However, the love of literacy or the love of reading is very situational and a cultural phenomenon.

...

The consensus that literacy is individual and situational could be another evasion. It certainly will not help us get the funding.

"

... from Participants' Response Cards

Aboriginal Issues ...

Most participants supported Native groups in their drive to take control of their own programs and develop curriculum that values their cultures.

"

Assisting Native Canadians to achieve self-government and thus control over their own future. Cultural self-confidence will lead to need for better education.

...

Interesting comments on providing a supply of literature as well as training people to be literate. We take literature for granted and our goals are maybe different from those in developing countries.

...

Racial aspects of Native problems need to be addressed in our culture. It needs to be admitted, since it is a real handicap in success rates from beginning of students' schooling. They feel subtly segregated though it's not always openly expressed.

...

Funding should be allocated directly to Natives' groups to implement their own programs, relevant to their needs. Native culture must be built into curriculum. Involve Native personnel. And move away from dependency on volunteers.

"

... from Participants' Response Cards

Learner Involvement ...

A popular theme was the need and desire for more involvement of learners in planning, designing, organizing and directing programs. How can this be done without coopting learners? How can we be sure all learners' perspectives are represented? How do we respond to learners' needs and not jeopardize program funding?

" Learners must be involved in design and organization of programs to ensure that they contain what the learners REALLY need and that they support the learners' voice.

...

Must recognize learners as capable (not handicapped).

...

How do we foster growth of the learners' movement without coopting it?

...

Are the mobilized learners speaking for most illiterate people or are they emulating the mobilized groups they have seen modelled for them?

...

What to do when the learners involved are more traditional and accepting of the status quo than the instructors and organizers of the programs?

...

Despite some of our beliefs in learner-centred literacy education, we (program managers) are still often driven by the funder policies rather than by learner needs.

...

The poverty, the emotion, the terror all need to be addressed.

...

Some students are obviously bright, many are angry. This moves them beyond the place where any programcan be just laid on them. I believe they should have/take control over their learning. But many of my students/ learners have learned helplessness, some fall into a passivity which overwhelms them. They do not know it can be different, that there is such a thing as empowerment.

...

Must make it possible for those in need to access literacy training by: reaching and motivating learners to come to programs, making programs relevant, providing the necessary support for them to stay in the program. "

... from Participants' Response Cards

Language ...

Several people said that our vocabulary was too complex. We should use plain language in speaking about literacy.

"

STOP using the terms *literate* and *illiterate*.

...

Robin Silverman's comments about the terms *literacy* and *illiteracy* strike a familiar bell. Learners in my experience don't see themselves as *illiterate* or *functionally literate*. They may need some 'upgrading' or they may want to read better but they don't label themselves that way.

...

Must find a new word for *literacy/illiteracy*. What do we use?

...

We have too many learners here to be using the kind of abstract language we're all using.

...

Like Robin Silverman I see the term illiterate as demeaning to learners, as well as inaccurate. How can one describe literacy as something that exists in specific contexts and on a continuum and then go on to speak of *illiterates*?

...

By using labels in the past we have started debate and helped initiate action. To recognize the problem it has to be named.

...

Yes, *illiterate* and *functional illiterate* terms are negative. We must listen to the learners and not get bogged down in institutional haggling. Funding must not get lost in administration but be directed to more learner events nationally.

...

As the term *literacy* comes to dominate and edge out other works such as *education, socialization,* and *skills* to cope with living, there's a danger that real educational needs get neglected. The term *literacy* seems to be becoming so broad and far-reaching and to encompass so much (from humanities and education to therapy) that it becomes impossible to delineate specific policies to meet all those needs and the term will become a fruitless cliche. I don't know what to do about it. The aims of this broad term *literacy* are wonderful but maybe they would be better served by calling them more particular terms rather than the umbrella term *literacy*.

" ... from Participants' Response Cards

Linking of Literacy Education with Economic Development ...

Many are worried about a workplace focus taking over in literacy programming and funding. The potentially conflicting goals and expectations between employers, labour groups and individual workers are of great concern. Several people pointed out that literacy is not necessarily a means to other ends such as international competitiveness or increased productivity.

"

Will we achieve complementary types of literacy/learning activities that can address students' life goals, work goals as well as opening them to beauties and pleasures of the printed language they may not have known? Or will we be swallowed up by the 'training' definitions of the private sector?

...

I applaud exuberantly the questioning of a reductionist/workplace focus to adult literacy. The warning about conflicting goals and expectations is timely as many are jumping on the bandwagon of workplace literacy.

...

Workers must identify goals, rather than wait for employers to impose them.

...

We must 'tame this potential monster'. There are no quick fixes and we must make this clear.

...

Literacy does include much more than basic reading and writing for profit. Self-confidence and enjoyment of literature and the learning process are the most important. "

... from Participants' Response Cards

"Employers who encourage literacy are not so much the problem as the other employees not involved in the literacy program who may say, "What do we get? They get time off, but we don't?"

...

We are in the very decade where all these literacy changes are to be fulfilled. I see the wheels of society turning away from valuing people as individuals and the very written word as becoming redundant. This should be an interesting contrast and counter-force to the increased demands on each individual to decode and comprehend the increasingly complex forms and paperwork for everyday living as well as at the job place.

...

Socio-economic development and increased levels of literacy do not necessarily generate increased social opportunities.

...

Literacy is a life oriented process not simply a functional means to survival.

...

Someone needs to educate the politicians and funding sources to enable them to understand that literacy is not a panacea, that literacy is not necessarily a means of achieving something else (ie. economic development).

...

Literacy must be valued for its own sake and should not have to justify itself in relation to the economy. That alienates the same groups it proposes to benefit.

...

Literacy as an end in itself...OK for people who are literate; not a great incentive for those who aren't...rather like luxury for some.

...

The corporate agenda is to promote capitalism – that is to have a more productive workforce."

... from Participants' Response Cards

First Language Literacy ...

The value of starting with developing literacy in one's *first language* first was addressed. What if the *first language* is an oral language and there is little published reading material? And what if learners are not interested in learning it?

> "
>
> What about literacy in languages that may not be sufficiently widespread to make publishing in them economical but they are critical to cultural survival and political justice (ie. aboriginal languages in Canada)?
>
> ...
>
> Need to integrate aboriginal or mother tongue literacy into programs.
>
> ...
>
> In Toronto there are more than 150,000 non English/French people with less than grade 9. The Literacy Movement must address this issue because there are many people who are illiterate in their first language.
>
> "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

Volunteers ...

The appropriate use, training, support networks and funding mechanisms for volunteer tutor programs remain contentious issues encompassing job security, quality of instruction, rapport with learners and the politics of women as unpaid workers.

"

Volunteers: their use, training, support networks, funding of programs?

...

If this issue is really so important, it's time to remove this issue from the volunteer agenda.

...

Should volunteers with little or no training be teaching illiterate students?

...

Too much responsibility is presently placed on volunteers.

...

Must keep professionals in charge of education...good heart is not enough.

...

The reason why volunteers are used in literacy programs is not primarily because of a lack of skilled adult teachers. The prime reason is lack of funding.

"

... from Participants' Response Cards

Professionalism and Accreditation ...

Alternate routes to accreditation of professionals are needed which validate experience in adult education. Some consensus about the content and process for this must be reached in the field to avoid the imposition of inappropriate rulings.

"

I am an elementary/secondary teacher. There seems to be a stigma against my teaching adults – unless I receive further training (much of which seems redundant to my previous training).

...

Better trained teachers who actually have the correct skills to really educate students in the basics. Need higher expectations of the teaching profession and results obtained. Why are the staff not lowering the problem and not getting the billions of dollars flowing our way better utilized?

...

Better training and professional development for instructors so that the quality of instruction improves.

...

How do we certify people who have extensive training in literacy instruction but no B.C. teaching certificate? Must have alternate routes to certification involving training in adult education.

...

Will adult education continue to be a marginal occupation and activity or will it at last evolve into a profession attracting the best minds, resources and commitments?

"

... from Participants' Response Cards

Women and Literacy ...

Many were impressed by the comment: "teach a man to read, you teach a man; teach a woman to read, you teach families for generations". Others cautioned that we must be clear that women have a right to an education to fulfil their own needs not just because they are parents.

"

I was particularly touched by Ryan's comment: teach a man to read, you teach a man; teach a woman to read, you teach families for generations...

...

Women ... must be careful not only educating women for the sake of their children rather than because of their own rights and needs.

...

More funding is needed to extend programming especially to women and parents who may be home-bound.

"

... from Participants' Response Cards

Funding, Funding, Funding ...

Overwhelmingly, people are concerned about funding. Who will provide funds? Who will receive funds? What kinds of programs will be fundable? When can we expect continuous, secure funding? Those from British Columbia called for implementation of the Provincial Literacy Advisory Committee's report and for the province to make a financial commitment to literacy/ABE programs through community colleges, school districts and community programs.

> "How will we be able to continue existing programs and expand to meet the increasing demand?
>
> ...
>
> I expect that funding will continue to be a major issue – there need to be creative solutions. Employers need to accept some responsibility for financing of education and training. Individuals too need to recognize their responsibility for their education.
>
> ...
>
> Cutbacks mean it is becoming increasingly difficult to remain employed in a particular area. The trend to contract, temporary and part time employment leads to a sense of fragmentation and dislocation for instructors and students alike. The trend to reliance on the business community for funding instead of government is dangerous.
>
> ...
>
> International Literacy Year has been a support to the development of curriculum materials and conferences. Not one cent has been spent to increase delivery programs for those who need and want them.
>
> ...
>
> Funding from both levels of governments. The way we want to be taught. The right to choose on what we want to learn and how.
>
> ...
>
> Funding to community-based programs, not delivered through colleges, must improve. Must be critical of school board and college involvement in literacy.
>
> ...
>
> Funding may well be the stumbling block in the next ten years. "
>
> ...

"Funding is a farce. There is no commitment from any government in Canada. They have only lied to us. We talk and talk and talk. Oh, it's fun for workers to get together and shoot the breeze but it does not educate people in ways they need access to.

...

Just a hope that after the hype there will be a continuing commitment when literacy is no longer a sexy issue.

...

Funding is a key, but I fear the theme will be how to do more with less. The pressure for government to control costs will continue through the 90's.

...

Provincial government must make a commitment to funding ongoing literacy/ABE programs through a variety of delivery systems – not just community colleges, but community-based projects as well.

...

Continuous, ongoing funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education is absolutely necessary for basic skills upgrading and life skills programs.

...

MUST HAVE acceptance and implementation of the Provincial Literacy Advisory Committee's report.

...

Government must create and abide by a policy that ensures equal opportunity and access to education or opportunities to learn.

...

Important to ... fight to be sure that literacy is not first to be axed under economic austerity ... to not be totally swayed to workplace literacy ... that literacy must hold some value for people we try to convince need literacy.

...

Must get money and other resources to the people doing the actual work in the trenches, who unlike the sophisticated professionals do not have the time or training to go after the limited resources. It makes me sick to see well funded air conditioned 'learning centres' with staff sitting around, sometimes outnumbering the learners when my own centre in a small hot stuffy space at times has 35-40 learners.

...

Is anyone with the power to make a difference listening?"

... from Participants' Response Cards

Community and Institutional Programs ...

The interface between community and institutional programs is sometimes uncomfortable, sometimes openly competitive, and sometimes an enriching partnership.

"

Yes to the understanding that literacy is not an institutional event. Those folk in the institutions need the front line workers; the workers need recognition and 'functional' security to stay in this profession – outside institutions.

...

Must make maximum use of advantages of working under an institutional umbrella (ie. establish a profile and eliminate the money scramble experienced by grassroots programs). Must keep in touch with the learners while meeting college requirements too.

...

Concentrate on prevention within public schools – address the k-12 system because it is the source of future adult learners.

...

Must re-vision the school system to be more flexible and practical.

...

Must make sure that students do not fall through the cracks at the primary and secondary level.

"

... from Participants' Response Cards

EVENING WITH FERNANDO CARDENAL

BACKGROUND

Evelyn Murialdo
Treasurer, Movement for Canadian Literacy
Community Development Officer, North York

INTRODUCTION

David Cadman
National President, United Nations Association in Canada

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Fernando Cardenal
Director, Nicaraguan Institute for Popular Education and Research
Former Sandinista Minister of Education, Nicaragua

Carmen Rodriguez
Conference Translator
Native Adult Education Resource Centre
Simon Fraser University

QUESTION PERIOD

CLOSING REMARKS

Gillies Malnarich
Developmental Studies Faculty, Douglas College
Co-Chair, Literacy 2000

BACKGROUND

Evelyn Murialdo

REPORT ON LESSONS FROM THE NICARAGUAN LITERACY CAMPAIGN BY FORMER SANDINISTA MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

CO-SPONSORED BY UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION IN CANADA, CANADIAN UNIVERSITY SERVICES OVERSEAS (CUSO) AND TOOLS FOR PEACE.

I am happy to welcome you to this forum. This morning Fernando and I met to plan this evening and we decided that the best way to start is to share with you a few memories.

More than ten years ago the Canadian government did not feel that it could support, financially or otherwise, a literacy campaign they knew little about. What little they knew through their formal channels indicated that they really shouldn't support it. Fortunately they decided that they needed a person to go to Nicaragua to observe the efforts of Nicaraguans in launching and implementing their literacy campaign. This person would then come back to Canada and make recommendations. So, in November 1979 I went.

Fernando at the time was the coordinator of the literacy crusade. He was glad to send me to see more than 120 literacy units across the country in less than four months, travelling by truck, by jeep, by horse and at times walking. So, you cannot begin to imagine the enthusiasm but also the reservations and caution that a person like me felt in that context. I came from a very stiff, rigid academic background so the apprehension of seeing the thousands and thousands of young people (all of them ranging in age from 13 to 23) who were involved in the process of the literacy campaign as tutors, educators, outreach workers, teachers, etc. was immense.

That apprehension came to an end abruptly. And it came to an end in Somoto one day as I was observing a 15 year old woman tutoring a 65 year old man – a man who had worked the land all his life from sunrise to sundown every day. The woman was becoming increasingly nervous as she tried to help Don Mariano, his name was, to acquire the motor coordination to draw the circles that would become the letters in the next few weeks. But Don Mariano couldn't. I was getting nervous too. But all of a sudden she stopped and she said, "Don Mariano, you know what, we are going to stop now and we are going to wait until the sun comes down this evening. And as you see the sun coming down this evening, you will see the perfect circle." And it was then, you see, when I understood what popular education is all about. And I also understood what skills popular educators bring with them.

In the fields close to the border with Honduras, where most of the families of the members of the Guardia Nacional – Somoza's army – lived, I saw the tremendous efforts of those same young people to change the curriculum that they were using so that the mothers, widows, sisters, brothers, sons and daughters of Somoza's army would learn to read and write, still feeling an integral part of the Nicaraguan family. Those young people couldn't change history but they could accommodate the curriculum. And then I learned about student-centred curriculum. And when I saw tutors and learners build latrines and wells together as part of the literacy campaign, I understood that literacy is so much more than reading and writing.

And finally, our last memory is when in the city of Leon I saw thousands of peasants, homemakers, children, teachers, older Nicaraguans and others coming together in the square to commemorate the massive killing at their Sandinista army headquarters the previous year. And they commemorated that with so much strength and hope that I understood then the kind of hope and strength we need to change our world, whatever part of the world we live in. So, in Canada, in my own little world, I have endless energy, mostly based on memories such as those, to advocate and work for social change and to advocate and work towards an anti-racist, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and participatory education for all.

By the way, the result of that little trip to Nicaragua was that the Canadian government supported, with more than a million dollars through the NGO's (non-governmental organizations) and matched by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) dollars, the very beginning of the Nicaraguan literacy campaign.

I would now like to invite David Cadman from the United Nations Association in Canada to introduce our friend, our compañero and speaker of tonight, Fernando Cardenal.

INTRODUCTION

David Cadman

When one speaks with the international adult education community about successful literacy campaigns, about successful adult education programs, there are two examples that always come to mind and are recognized as being probably the most excellent: the first, of course, being the one carried out after the Cuban revolution in the early 1960's; the second, the one carried out after the Nicaraguan revolution in the early 1980's. I think it is interesting to note that both of them were among the first priorities of a popular revolutionary government. Both of them occurred in the face of enormous economic hardship at a time when there were pressing demands for very scarce resources. Both of them occurred in the face of American military aggression and blockade. Both of them mobilized the young people of their country to build a future by helping others to master the tasks of claiming control of their lives through the literacy and learning process.

It is a great honour and privilege to have with us this weekend the former Minister of Education of Nicaragua who is currently the director of the Nicaraguan Institute for Popular Education and Research. I would ask you to give a very warm welcome to Fernando Cardenal.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Fernando Cardenal **Translation by Carmen Rodriguez**

Good evening, friends. For me it is an honour to be here with you tonight and to be able to communicate with strong simplicity. More than telling you about theories, I would like to narrate to you some concrete facts and historical events that happened in Nicaragua. The most important thing about what we are going to tell you tonight is that these are authentic facts, things that did happen and that, furthermore, were successful.

And before telling you in words what our history was, I would like to invite you to watch a video which is a summary of the literacy crusade in Nicaragua – a video that was made in the early 1980's right after the crusade and has been edited and summarized for you tonight here in Vancouver. So let's watch the video now and then we will come back and talk to you about it.

[Video transcription:]

> *The people of Nicaragua soon realized that the extraordinary task of launching a literacy crusade could only be achieved with everybody's participation. Thus, encouraged by the newly acquired strength and vitality that came from the recent triumph of the revolution, Nicaragua set out to work under the leadership of the revolutionary government for national reconstruction, and under the leadership of the Sandinista front for national liberation. All Nicaraguan popular organizations participated in the newly formed National Committee for Literacy which had branches in every department, municipality, and village. In that way is was ensured that everybody could participate in such a gigantic cultural project. The Ministry of Education became responsible for the organization and administration of the crusade. The Ministry set up a national coordinating executive body which, through its twelve technical divisions, did the groundwork and planned the crusade in a short period of time.*
>
> *At the same time, other organizations were doing pertinent work. With everybody's cooperation, in only 30 days and at a cost of $30,000, the statistics department was able to do a census which located all the people who could not read or write and all those who could act as instructors. 850,000 registered as learners and 266,590 offered themselves as instructors.*

A national professional team worked intensely, designing and elaborating a teaching method which would be appropriate to the country's care and historical process. This work resulted in a textbook that could be easily used in the teaching of reading and writing. The textbook was structured around 23 themes related to Nicaraguan national history, the revolutionary process, and the program for national reconstruction. Another element taken into account was that in the literacy process the learner should be the subject and not the object of his or her own learning. The instructor's manual was also carefully compiled including all necessary methodological explanations and pedagogical, political and organizational guidelines. Several pilot projects confirmed the efficiency and appropriateness of this method before launching the campaign itself.

Workshops for the instructors were set up by using a multiplying system: the progressive training of 80 people who would then train 700, these 700 trained 12,000, which in turn trained 200,000 instructors. In order to not interfere with production and the process of national reconstruction, two types of instructors were created: 1) popular instructors who were urban housewives, professionals, government employees, and workers of all kinds who wanted to collaborate but only had a few available hours every day. This group was in charge of teaching in the cities and semi-urban areas. 2) the popular literacy army (EPA), made up of highschool and university students who could leave the cities and teach full time in the countryside and the mountain regions.

EPA was organized in six fronts with the same names and locations as those that the Sandinista army had during the recent war of liberation. The departmental committees were in charge of locating the learners, assigning the instructors to their work areas, finding them places to stay and looking after their general safety. As well, a national radio network was set up, utilizing the Sandinista army radio and all state and commercial stations. This network served as a means of protection for the instructors and also supported their teaching by reviewing the pedagogical guidelines underlying the methodology in use.

Sunday, March the 23rd, 1980 at the Plaza of the Revolution the authorities bid farewell to the army which was then initiating the most noble cultural battle in the Americas. 80,000 Brigadistas were taken to their points of destination using all means of transportation.

[People sang about the literacy crusade:]

> *"The great literacy crusade has begun. It is never too late to learn. Nobody will be able to cheat us any more. To learn how to read is to erase the past and begin a new dawn."*
>
> *"Here we are, the Sandinistas singing songs to the Brigadistas. After a day of work in the countryside we are ready to open our books and say goodbye to ignorance. I am singing to the literacy crusade. Workers and peasants will always learn together in this our new country."*
>
> *"All along the Atlantic coast, reading and writing, our textbook, our cartillas, goes as a big travelling sun."*

In addition to teaching reading and writing, the Brigadistas shared the daily life of the campesinos and joined them in their work. Thus they also became learners and obtained rich and integral education for themselves. In this way Nicaraguans initiated a task that many had believed would be impossible. Worldwide attention was drawn to the literacy crusade and some were sceptical about its success. But when the people have an intelligent and sensitive leadership and trust their own capabilities such big efforts are destined to end in victory.

The urban popular instructors also carried out their tasks successfully. They certainly played a key role in the over-all triumph of the crusade. They worked in factories, schools, people's homes and many other places. The crusade also reached the blind. Special workshops designed for their particular needs were set up. The basic textbook used throughout the campaign was converted into Braille and those who could already read and write in this system taught those who couldn't.

Not long before, the beautiful Nicaraguan countryside and the mountain regions had been the scene of the war of liberation. The literacy crusade made all of Nicaragua the protagonist of a new war, this time against decades of inherited darkness and ignorance. The Brigadistas didn't take long to adapt to their new lifestyles. They knew they were immersed in a beautiful and extraordinary historical process – part of the new destiny being forged by the whole country. Even the most mundane experiences were felt as part of this enormous but beautiful responsibility. Any task, when done collectively, leads towards unity and therefore strength.

On weekends the Brigadistas would meet in the closest town and engage in recreational activities. Also, their parents would come from the city and visit them. This contributed to bringing the city and the countryside together even more. The literacy crusade also brought about other important achievements. In addition to their teaching, the Brigadistas collected flora and fauna samples; collaborated in the campaign to eradicate malaria; recorded important oral history, particularly related to the war of liberation; located and collected archaeological treasures which came to enrich the existing collections in national museums; and recorded folk music and stories.

During the campaign, Nicaragua received the support of many friendly nations. International solidarity played an important part in the success of the crusade.

July 22nd, a few weeks before the conclusion of the crusade, the final offensive was launched. Both the popular instructors in the cities and the popular literacy army in the countryside intensified their efforts and increased their activities. This well-planned final offensive shed fruitful results. One by one, villages, municipalities and departments declared victory over illiteracy.

August 15th, the popular literacy army began to demobilize. The goals of this contingent of brave young men and women had been achieved. Their hearts were filled with a pride that a job well done brings. Also, they had succeeded in bringing the city and the countryside closer together. The Brigadistas were actually key in contributing to the unity of the Nicaraguan people as one productive community. Nicaragua has taken an important step forward towards cultural liberation and the making of the new person.

August 23rd, all the contingents of urban instructors and Brigadistas marched from different parts of Managua and converged at the Plaza of the Revolution. They were joined by an excited crowd that cheered with them; we have fulfilled our duty, we have achieved our goal.

...

The theme tonight is the lessons that we can draw from the literacy campaign in Nicaragua. The first one that I would like to mention is the importance of motivation – the importance of motivating everybody so that they can contribute and be part of such a great initiative – first of all, motivating the peasants so that they would want to learn how to read and write, then motivating the students so that they would want to go and live for five months in the countryside or the mountain region to teach the peasants how to read and write. Before the actual launching of the campaign there was a previous campaign which was directed towards motivating everybody in the country into participation. All parts of government and all popular organizations participated in this huge campaign prior to the actual literacy crusade.

The second lesson that we can draw from our crusade is that it is fundamental to be commited to popular participation in an event like this. That is to say, the people have to take on the problem of illiteracy as their own, instead of thinking about it as a problem of, let's say, the Ministry of Education. The people have to realize that it's their own problem and then act on it on as if it was theirs.

In 1980, after the end of the campaign, UNESCO awarded Nicaragua its gold medal for literacy. This medal was not awarded because of the great *numbers* of people, absolute numbers of people, we were able to teach how to read and write, but actually because of the great participation of *all* the people in Nicaragua in the campaign. That same year, several countries in Africa had taught reading and writing to several million people. However, according to the director of UNESCO, he had never seen a literacy campaign which had integrated as many people in one country. For example, the prior steps to the campaign – the census that we had to do at the beginning when there was no financing, when we didn't really know which direction we were going to take in terms of the literacy campaign – was already a great effort. We had prepared the census form to be taken out into the countryside and the mountain regions. We got all the popular organizations together – the youth, the peasant organizations, the workers' organizations. We didn't have a penny but all these people voluntarily left the city and went into every corner of the country and came back, one or two weeks later, with completed forms and having located every illiterate person in the country. The peasants offered their own homes and shared their poor amount of food with the Brigadistas during the five months that the campaign took place.

A great third lesson that we learned from this campaign was that the youth was not only capable of having fought against the Somocista dictatorship but also that they could be great teachers. 60,000 young people became teachers, true teachers, and with great dedication made sure that each one of their students was able to learn how to read and write.

Later on, when 2000 Cuban teachers went back to Cuba we were very afraid that these 2000 spots were going to be empty and we wouldn't have any teachers to replace them. So we made a call to the youth again, and 2000 of those Brigadistas that had participated in the campaign in 1980 offered their service. They left their studies and went to teach in the countryside for two years. And again last year, when we initiated a second campaign, again it was the youth that came up and offered themselves as volunteers to again teach reading and writing to the people, this time not outside of their cities but in the surrounding areas.

Another big lesson that we learned was that the same peasant who was learning how to read and write could become a great teacher. When the literacy campaign finished there was a deficit of teachers in Nicaragua. We needed more teachers. There were more than 400,000 people that had just finished learning how to read and write and they were ready to go on into other studies but we didn't have enough teachers. So it was this huge problem and at one point we thought that we didn't know how to solve it.

So, what happened was that those people that had just learned became the teachers of those that knew less. So the ones that knew a little more became the popular educators that were able to teach those who knew a little less. It was a bold, audacious and courageous measure which came really out of the pressure of not knowing at that point exactly what to do. But we put our trust in the people and the extraordinary result was that it was incredibly successful and most of these people became very good teachers. So, this gave birth not only to the new popular educator, but to the whole concept of popular education in Nicaragua. In the first six months after the end of the crusade more than 18,000 popular educators were working. I want to clarify that these 18,000 people were people who had just finished learning during the crusade, or they were peasants who had the equivalent of a 4th, 5th or 6th grade education and after some training then began to teach those who knew less than them. In the second half of that year we were able to integrate more than 24,000 popular educators. In the next semester then, we reached the figure of 25,000.

If you had gone to Nicaragua in those days, you would have encountered something like this: In one small town Luis Gomez, 13 years old, teaches ten adults how to read and write. Popular educators teach from 3 until 5 in the afternoon, and then later in the evening they become students in their own programs. A peasant woman, the mother of five, teaches seven other adults how to read and write from 3 until 5 in the afternoon, at the same time feeding her baby; then between 6 and 8 she goes to her own classes in the evening. Thirty year-old Garcia, in his wheelchair, teaches forty people how to read and write. Petrono Porta who is 60 teaches another woman who is 40 how to read and write and they sit together for three hours every day because they want to make up for all the time that has been lost. Felix Galiano, who is 61 years old and who learned how to read and write during the crusade, dedicates himself to visiting the adult literacy classes every day so as to be an example to the younger people; he tells them "Look, I learned ... why couldn't you learn?" A girl who is 13 leads a collective of people; she is teaching some people how to read and write at the very basic level while at the same time she is teaching math at a higher level to other people. She is also visiting them at home to keep them motivated and at the same time she has taught her mother how to read and write.

In spite of all the difficulties, in spite of the poverty and the hard work in the sun all day, thousands of these peasant people integrated themselves into the literacy programs. Close to 150,000 people registered to study the first levels of literacy in the first 6 months. Then at the higher level over 160,000 registered. At the third level 180,000 registered.

I would like to read a quote from a book by Rosa Maria Torres, an Ecquadorian educator, which very clearly summarizes what I have been trying to communicate here tonight. It's called *Towards a New Concept of Popular Education.*

> "Perhaps one of the most important, genuinely revolutionary achievements of the Nicaraguan crusade has been the creation of what is called the 'popular educator'. By making a worker or a peasant into an educator of other workers and peasants, Nicaragua has set the basis for a model of popular self-education, defined and legitimized because all of the popular sectors are the recipients of this education and at the same time they are the educators of their own people – by using those that know a little more in order to teach those that know a little less and by putting them together in a common experience in which both learn and teach. By doing this Nicaragua broke with all the traditional roles assigned to the figure and the status of the teacher. The insecurity, the inexperience, the lack of professionalism, even the presence of a coordi-nator, embody the negation of the traditional teacher and, instead, put forward the creation of a new concept of the teacher – one who is part of the students, who is one more student because he belongs to the same group.
>
> There is one concept of popular education that is somewhat revolutionary. That is the concept of *liberating* education which is aware of the importance of bringing about a process of awareness in the people. How-ever, this approach is still limited by the very traditional model of the teacher because there is not an equal relationship between the student and the teacher. The only model that would allow for that inequality to actually be broken is this new concept of the 'popular educator' in which the relationship between teacher and student is radically changed because the student and the teacher are actually one and the same. They all belong to the same group. They have all experienced the *same* experiences. And finally, this brings multiple repercussions, not only to the educational process, but to society as a whole. Therefore it is an integral and revolutionary creation."

We also learned that all true education must end up with the organization of those who are studying. Another lesson that we learned was that education is not just a process which ultimately is going to lead an individual into further achievements in terms of more studies or work. What is most important is that that person becomes aware of his or her capacity to change the world around them and that they will be able to do this only if they get together in an organized way with those that are at the same level.

By working in the crusade and then in the years after the crusade, we have come to the conclusion, and we are convinced of the fact, that there is no *neutral* education. All education is political. The only thing is that each educator has to choose what kind of politics he or she is going to instill into his form of education. But historically there has never been neutral education.

A person from India that was visiting Nicaragua prior to the beginning of the revolution told me that this campaign was actually too political. "Why did you have to start", he asked, "with the word *revolution*? Why didn't you start with the word *water*?" First of all, I had to point out to him that we had not chosen those words, that actually what had happened was we had gone out into the mountains, into the countryside, and through dialogue with the peasants and the workers, we had discovered which were the themes that *they* were interested in going through and that those words were their words.

We told this Indian technician that what we were interested in was following the Paulo Freire kind of pedagogy in which, through dialogue, people become aware of what it is that is around them that they have to work on in order to change – to change their own lives and their place in society. I also told him that what he was proposing was highly political as well because in choosing words like *water* – we could even choose things like *cloud* or something even higher up – we would be covering up the real issues or the real problems that people needed to talk about and learn about.

We also learned that money is quite important particularly when you want to do *big* things like this literacy crusade. But what we discovered even more was the key role of human resources. When a people assumes a problem, takes on a problem and makes it it's own, then there is no way to stop. This is something basic that we discovered. And it has influenced not only education but many other areas in the life of the country. We're convinced that if people begin to look at their own problems – let's say, their problems in health, their problems in living conditions – and become aware of the history behind them and get to know them thoroughly then they will be able to come up with the solutions to solve those problems.

The Spanish writer, Ignacio Gonzales, in his book about a trip that he took in Central America, compares the Nicaraguan literacy crusade to the building of the Egyptian pyramids and the Great Wall of China. I would like to communicate to all of you adult educators here is that what we have in our hands, what we have to work with, is a human resource which is capable of wonderful things – that all it takes is faith and confidence in people's ability to succeed, and then we will all grow together.

We drew lessons from the literacy crusade which were applied to the whole educational system in Nicaragua. The crusade became somewhat a lab in which we experimented and in which we came up with new models to be applied in the entire educational system. First, the reality of the people, the true reality, and the history of the people themselves had to be the content of the curriculum – an education directed towards the formation of a critical individual, an individual who would be ready to observe and decide for himself or herself, not simply swallow everything that was put in front of him – and also an individual who would be ready to work with others in order to change things.

We also broke with the model of the teacher as the one who is 'up there' and is the one who knows, giving knowledge to those 'down there' and who don't know. The model that we adopted was a dialogical model in which both teachers and students would switch roles and become the same in the classroom – an educational model that would always be looking toward change, into the future, into actively changing the future for a better purpose – looking always at the creativity and the solutions for our own problems, solutions that come from the people themselves – an education that could integrate manual work with intellectual work. The national goal was that there shouldn't be one student who didn't work nor one worker who couldn't study, thus bringing together the countryside and the city.

I would like to summarize in these few words: The lessons we learned from the literacy campaign of 1980 became the guidelines to transform the whole educational system of Nicaragua up until last April (when there was a change of government).

Before going on to the question period I would like to mention what is for me the most dramatic lesson of this campaign. The hardest and most painful lesson came from the fact that 59 young people, Brigadistas, died during this campaign and seven of them were killed by Contra forces that were trying to prevent the crusade from happening. However, the rest of the Brigadistas continued to work until the end, and that showed us how heroic our youth has been. Today in the main room of the museum of literacy in Managua there are pictures and some personal things of these 59 young Brigadistas as a show of our appreciation for this youth – for how hard they worked and how they were ready to give their lives for such an important task.

It is with great emotion, thinking of these young people who gave their lives for this task, that I will end my presentation tonight by saying that the crusade in Nicaragua taught us many lessons as I have related. And I only hope that I have been able to communicate some of my thoughts clearly enough so that you adult educators can also draw some lessons from this epic that we were a part of. Thank you very much. Feel free to ask any questions. I will respond to the best of my ability.

...

QUESTION PERIOD

Question: I know that in Nicaragua, Spanish is the main language. There are also other languages, two at least I know about – the English in Bluefields and the language of the Miskitos up in the north. I wonder if this was taken into account in the literacy campaign.

Response: The campaign, besides being done in Spanish which is the main language, the majority language, was also done in four other languages which represent four basic ethnic groups in the country – in English, in Miskito, in Suma, and in Rama. The Sumas and the Ramas are groups of 8000 people, so you can appreciate how much respect was shown for small groups of people. The whole project was adapted to their own needs instead of trying to teach them how to read and write in Spanish which for them was a second language. The goal for them was to first learn how to read and write in their own language and then learn Spanish later as a second language.

Question: You said that all education must end up with the organization of the people who are studying. In Canada that statement has been debated quite heavily – whether or not the people who are the literacy students have the right and the abilities to then participate in the literacy movement as they progress through their learning. Could you expand on that and give me some of your thoughts?

Response: Not only in Nicaragua, but in many places in Latin America, we are convinced that popular education must come up from the popular organizations themselves and then return those people to those popular organizations in order to strengthen them and to continue the social action that is needed to bring about change. If we start with the very basic concept of popular education which is to begin with the reality of a person, then that person, in the process of learning how to read and write, will begin to know about that reality – will begin to understand the injustice and the inequality to which he or she has been subjected. And by doing that he will also begin to articulate those changes that need to take place in order to change the situation overall. So that person will begin through this knowledge to organize with other people in order to achieve social action and to furthermore achieve change.

I was talking to a popular educator from the United States not too long ago and she was telling me that at the centre where she was working the black people would go there to learn how to read and write so they could vote and they could do something in their own community in order to change their situation. So in this case, for example, there is a political intention behind the desire to know how to read and write. If you have hurdles in your life because of your lack of skills in reading and writing then you learn how to read and write in order to go over those hurdles and then achieve the political goals that you have set out for yourself. I am not giving lessons for Vancouver or Canada but I can say for sure that this is a clear concept in Latin America and I'm sure that all popular educators there practice it.

It is inconceivable to us that a person can be marginalized and kept in ignorance – and probably the person also suffers from poverty. It is inconceivable to us that that person will learn something other than about her own reality, that she will be learning about something 'up in the clouds'. In the middle ages it was said that illiterate people were stronger and tamer for work. Now, to me it is not clear whether that person is actually stronger, but that he or she is subdued. It is true – ignorance makes people accept the injustice and inequality that is imposed on them.

And in Latin America, most governments don't launch literacy campaigns because what they are interested in is cheap labour. It is not by chance that only two countries in history have had such a major literacy campaign. Many of the other countries have a lot more resources, a lot more money, than Cuba and Nicaragua have. Why haven't they done literacy campaigns? So it is clear that ignorance has been an instrument of the oppressors to keep people subdued and that education can become the tool of liberation for those people.

Question: When you were speaking you were not only talking about people's access to literacy, but the democratization of the teaching process. Most of the popular educators that I know in Canada have Bachelor's or Master's degrees and they are 'popular educators'. The struggle which I feel is part of the problem is the scarcity of resources for teaching in Canada – and we don't have the Brigadistas. I've been to many conferences were practitioners, literacy teachers, speak about solving the problem. Our voice is almost worn out. I am almost at the point where I feel some mass movement is the only way that anything will get done in this country because practitioners are few in number and they are worn out. And I welcome some kind of mass movement on a different level than the educated practitioner level.

Response: I am sure that this is an issue that you will be able to discuss with your colleagues a lot better than you would with me. I only arrived in Vancouver yesterday and I am not very aware of the reality here but I am sure that among you you will be able to solve it. And I think that your comment is quite important in terms of that being something you need to discuss with other colleagues.

CLOSING REMARKS

Gillies Malnarich

Thank you for this evening, Fernando. The organizing committee for Literacy 2000 wants you to know that our institution, Douglas College, will be working in the next days and weeks to build an affiliation with the Nicaraguan Institute for Popular Education and Research. This gives us great pleasure and for us is one of the most positive outcomes of the conference.

Fernando Cardenal responds

Something that I have just thought about is that I don't think these kinds of governments (like the present government in Nicaragua) discuss these issues very much. Actually they have been very clear; they know that education can be a tool of liberation so as soon as they get in office they begin to attack education and that is where all the cutbacks first take place. And that's why we who are aware of the importance of education have to continue our efforts in whatever way we can and that's why I am so greatful about the initiative that Douglas College is doing in terms of supporting this work that we are going to continue through the Institute in Nicaragua.

And it would be beautiful if Canada which supported the literacy crusade in so many ways ten years ago could support this new initiative that we are beginning – with a lot more difficulty and with a lot more hurdles to go over but with the same confidence and the same love for our people.

Thank you very much for your presence, and for your interest in the Nicaraguan education issue, and for your support.

DEFINING LITERACY: CONCEPTION & STRATEGIES

UNDERSTANDING LITERACY AS A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

Francis Kazemek
Professor, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington
Tutor and tutor trainer
Researcher and writer in adult literacy

CLOSING GAPS BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTISE

Pat Rigg
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Trainer, teachers and teacher-educators
First and second language literacy teacher
Designer and evaluator of literacy programs and institutes

REVEALING FACTS: STATISTICS CANADA'S 1990 STUDY

Gilles Montigny
Project Manager, Special Surveys Branch, Statistics Canada

Stan Jones
Professor, Applied Linguistic Department, Carleton University

THIS WORKSHOP WAS AN intense and lively one. The over 50 participants expressed great enthusiasm for Kazemek's delivery style and message and for the most part were happy to have him say "out loud" what they believe literacy to be.

Kazemek began by outlining the two major streams in literacy instruction. The first defines literacy as the acquisition of some set of functional and/or workplace skills. The second sees literacy as a comprehensive and lifelong developmental process. Clearly supporting the second definition, Kazemek proceeded to delineate the false and inaccurate assumptions on which the first definition is built. Two such assumptions are that literacy equals jobs and that literacy training is a relatively short term process (i.e. acquisition of generalizable basic skills). Such simplistic thinking may be in response to "crisis" statistics like the Southam report.

There are underlying beliefs and assumptions that form the basis of the second definition of literacy: literacy as a personal, social, contextual, transactive and constructive process. This definition assumes that literacy education is a long term process incorporating the range of language functions and is a means of transforming and broadening one's perspective. Adult learners are more than consumers and functionaries.

Kazemek then concluded his workshop by discussing the implications of working from the developmental definition of literacy. The context and form of literacy education must reflect the social and political nature of language and literacy. The content of literacy education must highlight language functions and the plurality of literacy. The imaginative function of language is a key. There are no quick fixes. Literacy is a practice not a commodity.

... from the Facilitator's Report

UNDERSTANDING LITERACY AS A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

IS LITERACY SIMPLY THE ACQUISITION OF A SET OF SKILLS? ARE THERE EASY SOLUTIONS AND QUICK FIXES? ANALYZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS VIEW AND A CONTRARY ONE WHICH HAS WIDESPREAD IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERACY PROGRAM STRUCTURING, FUNDING AND TEACHING.

Francis Kazemek

The great English poet, William Blake, once observed, "To Generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit. General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess" (Blake 1966, 451). We may take exception to Blake's own over-generalization, but we cannot ignore its underlying significance. Scholars from a wide range of disciplines are acknowledging the importance of the particular, the contextual (for example, see Green 1988).

When we explore literacy and illiteracy, it is all too easy to generalize and engage in the kind of abstractions and idiotic statements that we see and hear in the media, from politicians and from representatives of the corporate world. Thus, it is vitally important that we always keep the particular before us. Literacy is a personal, social, cultural, contextual, gender-related and constructive process whereby a particular individual builds meaning with a particular text depending upon her particular purposes for reading and writing. It is, first and foremost, an end in itself, although it may also serve as a means to other ends (Schole 1989).

The *particular* view of literacy is quite different from *abstract* notions that are being promulgated by various governmental agencies, corporate

> “Everyone appreciated Kazemek's discussion about using "rich" text (imaginative, poetic) along with the whole language approach. This provides a method to integrate the creative with what society, learners, and funders demand. Literacy is a means of shifting perspectives. Reading and writing should be used to relate to life's other written and unwritten texts.
>
> ...
>
> To be able to get adults to read and write with pleasure, is to implement more of a personal and expressive approach.”
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

leaders and even some educators. Abstract views of literacy typically emphasize *functional* and *workplace* skills which ultimately are designed to help individuals fit into the status quo and become consumers and functionaries within the world of corporate capitalism. Literacy training is restricted to performance with a narrow range of texts within a narrow range of situations; it becomes a process whereby adults are trained to advance the 'economic competitiveness' of their society.

I want to explore briefly the differences between these two views and some of their possible implications. Thus, I first examine literacy from an *abstract* and *functional* perspective and contend that this is a limited and dangerous view within a democracy. Second, I discuss literacy from a *particular* perspective and maintain that it is a comprehensive and lifelong developmental process. Third, I present some of the programmatic and instructional implications that follow from this more comprehensive and developmental perspective.

Literacy as Abstract and *Functional*

The growing emphasis today upon literacy as some set of *functional* or workplace skills (for example, see Chisman, 1989) reflects what I want to call *abstract* notions of literacy. These views are abstract because they narrow what it means to be literate and then generalize the resultant limited range of skills to the wider world. The Adult Performance Level (APL) Project is probably the most well-known of such an orientation (Northcutt 1975). Levels of competency were determined on the basis of years of schooling, occupation, and income – clearly measures of class – and then generalized to the adult population as a whole. The result is that adults are statistically categorized according to their relative command of abstract and context-free skills and knowledges, for example, being able to read bus and train schedules.

Such narrow and partial views of literacy are based on questionable assumptions and research, reflect simplistic thinking and foster an ideology of domestication. The belief that there is some universal set of literacy skills which transcends culture, context, text, purpose, and motivations simply has not been supported in theory, research or practice (Hunter & Harman 1979; Venezky, Wagner, & Ciliberti 1990). This belief reflects a 'commonsensical' and non-critical understanding of the reading and writing processes. Moreover, such a rather simplistic understanding is often used to neutralize the potential power that is inherent in literacy (Freire 1970). These abstract and simplistic notions fuel the 'crisis' statistics that regularly appear in the media and likewise place the onus of illiteracy squarely on the shoulders of the adults themselves. Complexity is sacrificed for simplicity, and the wide range of possible contributory factors, for example, the socio-economic, is ignored. Let's look more closely at some specific features of this abstract and functional perspective.

In addition to its realization in the form of various sets of generalizable *basic skills*, literacy from an abstract perspective today often manifests itself in the form of *basic skills* limited to a restricted range of texts, contexts and purposes, for example, reading and writing to function at a specific job. While seemingly particular, such literacy training is nevertheless abstract because of its severe restriction and distortion of language function; the multitudinous forms and uses of reading and writing are effectively ignored in favour of some *workplace literacy skills.*

Since these *basic skills*, whether general or job-specific, already have been identified by different experts, literacy is further viewed as something to be given to or done to adults. It is something to be "banked" into adults by others (Freire 1973). As such, it seldom fosters personal, social and economic empowerment of an expansive kind. Rather, it gives individuals a deceptive or superficial sense of control over their world while at the same time guaranteeing that they remain consumers of other people's purposes and ideas.

Furthermore, this bankable skills orientation usually results in literacy training of a relatively short duration. It doesn't take long to train individuals to perform literacy tasks typically limited to what Halliday (1973) calls the "informative" function of language, that is, language to report and inform. Scholars and practitioners too often contribute to this mistaken orientation by fostering the notion that one can become literate in a short period of time, say, 100 hours or 8 weeks.

Literacy as Particular, Comprehensive, and a Lifelong Developmental Process

Literacy involves more than 100 hours of training. It is more than being able to do what someone else expects us to do on the job or elsewhere. As discussed earlier, literacy is a personal, social, contextual, transactive, gender-related, and constructive process whereby we rewrite "the texts that we read in the texts of our lives, and keep on rewriting our lives in the light of those texts" (Scholes 1989, 155). It is a transformative process whereby we have the potential to shape our lives and effect change in our world (Mezirow 1978).

Accordingly, literacy *education*, as opposed to literacy *training*, is a long-term process which incorporates the whole range of language functions and not simply the *informative*. It involves using reading and writing to request and persuade, to control the behaviour of others, to establish and maintain social relationships, to express one's feelings and opinions, to imagine and create worlds, to inquire and explore, and to use language to reflect and turn on language itself (Halliday & Hasan 1989; Bruner 1986). As such, educators and adults are constantly exploring the tension that exists among these specific language functions, specific texts, specific contexts, and specific readers and writers. This takes time.

Thus, literacy education seen from this *particular* and potentially transformative perspective recognizes the adult as a *whole* person and not simply as a consumer, worker or functionary. Its ultimate goal is to help individuals see themselves and the world in a multi-perspectival manner: "An education for freedom must move beyond function, beyond the subordination of persons to external ends" (Greene 1988,133).

Some Programmatic and Instructional Implications

Literacy as a particular and developmental process has specific implications for educators. Let me briefly present the ones that I think are most important.

First, the context and form of literacy education must reflect the social, dialogic and political nature of language and literacy. This means that social and collaborative efforts, for example, learning circles, would take precedence over one-on-one tutoring and individual computer use. Such social interaction and exploration of pertinent topics and texts allow adults to question their

> "An issue of concern was the negative implications of workplace and functional literacy programs which narrow our perspective rather than broaden our conceptions. Literacy is a comprehensive, developmental process that exists on a continuum in which we are all involved throughout our lives. Literacy cannot be narrowed down to 'just' a set of particular skills. Our students want/deserve the same kind of literacy we enjoy.
>
> ...
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> Concern was raised about how to implement such programs given the guidelines from funders and limited resources. The political and economic climate effects how we work and design programs."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

own and other's (including the instructor's) ideas in a manner that one-on-one tutoring typically does not encourage; it lessens the chance for *banking* by the tutor. Moreover, it encourages a sense of community among adults in which such things as computers and software may be used as *tools* to explore texts and express ideas.

Second, the content of literacy education must highlight, not ignore or downplay, all of the language functions; it must recognize the plurality of literacies and the plurality of motives among adults (Beder and Valentine 1990). More specifically, literacy education needs to stress the importance of the imaginative function of language. A wide range of research from various disciplines has shown us how central *narrative* ways of knowing are to humankind (Bruner 1986). Narratives in one form or another would seem to be the natural basis for literacy education and perspective transformation. The imaginative function of language as manifest in storytelling, story reading and writing, oral histories, group LEA texts, journals and diaries, and poetry/song lyric reading and writing should occupy center stage in any literacy program.

Third, educators need to be open and honest with adults concerning the developmental nature of literacy. There are no *quick fixes*; one does not suddenly become literate in 100 hours. We must let adults know that such quick fixes result in a surface control of print and not in the ability to use literacy for one's own purposes and possible empowerment. Unless we are candid with adults, and ourselves, we will face the possibility of discouraging adults (who won't be able to read Hemingway after 100 hours of instruction) and deluding ourselves about the gains of our students (Diekoff 1988). Moreover, we need to stress with adults that literacy simply won't *just happen* without effort on their part. Literacy is a *practice* (Gee 1986) that requires regular practice in order for one to become proficient. Concomitantly, we as educators need to be advocates for the *whole* range of literacy functions by modelling and offering adults possibilities for different kinds of reading and writing. As Mezirow (1989) contends, adults with limited literacy abilities quite often do not know the literacy possibilities that would be available to them if they were more proficient.

Fourth and lastly, literacy from a developmental and lifelong perspective mandates that adults have possibilities to use purposefully their growing abilities in a wide variety of situations. Initial literacy programs must be tied to such on-going and expansive literacy contexts as community action groups, workplace issue groups, writing workshops, book sharing circles, cross-generational reading and writing groups, interest groups, and so on.

Literacy, like any complex phenomenon, can be simplified in a reductive manner only to the peril of literacy itself. Simplification of literacy results in such distortions as skills hierarchies, *basic skills*, 'grade levels', forms of assessment that delimit instead of empower, and so forth. Our responsibility as adult literacy educators is to recognize, honour and promulgate complexity.

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PAT RIGG OPENED THE WORKSHOP by outlining the four areas in which gaps exist between research and practise: composition, gender, first language literacy, and participatory curriculum. Rigg provided a brief overview of the nature of these gaps then divided the group to brainstorm on the issues raised.

In the area of composition, practice is ahead of research. We have compilations of what students write; we recognize the value of compositions drawn from personal experiences; and we have guesses about why and how they write. We embrace these concepts in our practise but there is little research to demonstrate our conclusions.

There is not much research concerning gender and our practise does not indicate much specializing of curriculum and program design to recognize gender difference.

The validity of teaching English literacy only in ESL settings was discussed. More research is needed to address the degree to which success in learning a second language is related to level of literacy in one's first language.

Research in the area of participatory curriculum indicates that knowledge and learning are socially constructed events. This has implications for our practise as weresolve such issues as reconciling student expectations with accountability to funding agencies, assessment and evaluation, use of volunteers as tutors, and pedagogically correct approaches.

These highlights from the workshop serve to note the areas which deserve further research. Participants were interested in the notion of conducting authentic research in their own programs and having this work circulated among the Adult Basic Education community in accessible formats and newsletters – not academic journals! Lastly, many were intrigued with the idea of increased student participation in the formulation of a research project through a participatory network. As one participant stated, "I have heard what I need to know to be reminded to start with the learner."

... from the Facilitator's Report

CLOSING GAPS BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN THE LITERACY FIELD AND WHAT IS THEIR IMPACT ON LEARNERS? FIND OUT WHICH ISSUES WE OUGHT TO HIGHLIGHT IN THE COMING DECADE AND WHY.

Pat Rigg

What is the role of writing in current, typical adult literacy programs? Let's look first at current guidelines and practices in adult literacy education, and then at current research on composing, especially as it applies to adults becoming literate. Finally, let's see how this current research could be incorporated into adult literacy classes.

Current Guidelines and Practices

In adult education composing is usually seen as a skill or set of skills separate from reading. Although there are some exceptions (see, for example, Elsasser & John-Steiner 1977), the emphasis in most adult literacy programs is on the *functional* or *survival* writing skills, such as filling out forms, completing applications, writing business letters, and so on. If one looks at some of the most commonly used textbooks and approaches to literacy instruction for adults, one gets an idea of the kinds of writing activities that are being recommended and used by literacy instructors. The Adult Performance Level (APL) project (Northcutt 1975) is probably today's most influential research study of adult literacy (Cranney 1983). The instructional materials and approaches to instruction advocated by APL authors are widely used. A brief look at the APL Scope and Sequence Charts (1976) is revealing. These charts describe "enabling objectives" for the various APL knowledge areas (Occupational Consumer Economics, Health, Community Resources, Government and Law) and APL skill areas (reading, writing, speaking/listening, computing, problem solving, interpersonal relations). A typical enabling objective from Occupational Knowledge is:

The adult learner writes a list of words and abbreviations found in job-related ads.

After adults master such enabling objectives, they are then ready to fill out practice employment application forms. Similarly, adult learners are asked to practice writing a job resume and letter of application for a job. In the Consumer Economics section, typical writing activities include using vocabulary items in written sentences after reading a prespecified list of words dealing with money management. Adult students are also asked to list the different types of restaurants in their areas, such as Chinese, Italian, carry-out and so on.

The writing activities suggested by the Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA), one of the two largest volunteer literacy organizations in the USA, reflect an approach to writing instruction that in several ways is similar to that of APL. The LVA Tutor handbook (Colvin & Root 1976) suggests that the tutor begin writing activities by having the student practice the alphabet. A following activity has the tutor use a list of words for the student first to recognize, then to write as the tutor dictates them. The tutor then corrects any mistakes the student has made and asks the student to focus on correct spelling. Finally, the handbook says the tutor should allow the adult to move ahead in reading, but should continue to practice writing by using words and sentences from earlier lessons and from sight word lists.

Teaching Reading in Adult Basic Education (Bowren & Zintz 1977) is a textbook on the methodology of adult literacy education. The section on writing is very limited. Writing instruction, according to Bowren & Zintz, should focus on two areas:

1)writing skills, in which adults practice filling in forms and writing down what the teacher dictates;

2)handwriting experience, in which writing exercises are built around 220 words from the Dolch Basic Sight Word list.

The emphasis is upon filling out forms correctly and extending the adult's sight vocabulary by having the adult write 'easy' sentences containing 'service' words from dictation (Bowren & Zintz 1977, 198).

Finally, Newman's *Adult Basic Education: Reading* (1980) provides examples of adult students' written work, but offers very little specific pedagogical information on writing instruction. Newman's text deals with reading; there is an implication that writing is a separate subject and should be dealt with accordingly.

The purposes of writing for adult education students seem to be:

1) reinforcing reading skills;

2) filling in forms;

3) practising the forms of such functional prose as letters applying for a job or for welfare benefits.

This view of writing and the current practices which grow from it reflect a lack of awareness or a dismissal of current research on composing. Specialists in publishing adult education materials (such as Steck-Vaughn of Austin, TX), APL researchers and program designers, and many teachers seem unaware of recent research into composing, both beginning and more advanced. We will here summarize briefly some of the recent research on composing that is most pertinent to adult education, and will then suggest some specific applications that incorporate this research.

Current Research on Composing

The names of some writing researchers are well known to teachers of reading and composing at both public schools and universities; most of us recognize the names of James Britton, Marie Clay, Donald Graves, Martha King, and James Moffett. Their work with children and their insights into the writing process have been incorporated by some publishers into their materials, by some program planners into their curricula, and by some teachers into their classrooms. But all this research has been almost exclusively in elementary and secondary schools.

There has been some research into the writing of adults, much of it with adults of college age who were enroled in composition courses. In 1977 Mina Shaughnessy published her important *Errors and Expectations*, a research study of the compositions of college basic skills students. Shaughnessy's research method was, basically, to examine the students' compositions in an attempt to discover what the writers had tried to say and to discover how they had failed to accomplish their intentions. This analysis of errors in the writers' products was important; both further research and classroom practices have been strongly affected. For researchers, Shaughnessy's work meant looking beyond and, in a sense, behind the page; it meant looking at the writer's intentions as these could be perceived by a study of the written product, and attempting to determine what psychological and linguistic processes had affected those intentions so as to garble the message. Shaughnessy focused on what the writer was trying to do and what had happened in that attempt, rather than focusing on how the writer deviated from some abstract norm of standard, correct expository prose. It was natural for researchers after Shaughnessy to focus even more on the processes by which writers attempted to express their meaning, and this focus meant studying the process rather than the product.

Emig (1971) had already tried to do this with her case study in which she asked a young writer to reflect on and to discuss aloud the processes she was going through while composing. Several researchers after Shaughnessy used both interviews with writers and observations of writers as they wrote. Flower and Hayes (1981) used Emig's think aloud research technique as they studied what they called "writer-based" and "reader-based" prose. Pianko's (1979) research with college freshmen, Perl's (1980) with skilled and unskilled writers, and Zamels' (1983) with writers using English as their new language, all used introspection, reflection, and discussion with the researcher-observers. Probably the most important conclusion of all this research is that composing is not a linear process of encoding what the writer means; it is not a matter of getting one's ideas down on paper, but is rather a process of creating and discovering those ideas.

Flower and Hayes (1981) call composing "a cognitive process" and emphasize its recursive nature; we write something, read it, scratch out parts, scribble in others, reread it, write more, reread, go back to the first and rearrange, and so on. We use what we've written not only to write more, but to discover what we mean. Writing is, as Moffett (1981) calls it, a process of "composing the mind". Don Murray's benchmark article, *Teach writing as process, not product* (1972) was one of the first to use the term "process" and his article still clearly states the implications for process teaching. Briefly, those implications are:

1. The text for the class is the students' own writing;

2. The students find their own subjects, and use their own language;

3. Students write all the drafts they feel are necessary;

4. Any form is encouraged;

5. Mechanics come last.

Murray's implications alter the view of adult new readers and writers; suddenly they are not shameful or lazy students, dummies or criminals. They are new writers; their texts are their writing; their subjects are their property and responsibility; their goals, purposes, language are their own. What they choose to learn, read, write about is their decision. These implications are certainly not new in composition programs around the country, but they are almost unheard of in adult literacy programs. Two programs which put these implications in practice are Boston's Adult Literacy Resource Institute, which publishes *Tell Me More*, a collection of adult student writing, and the Invergarry

> " I may have found a methodological strategy to collect data dealing with self concept/literacy, gender and accountability.
>
> ...
>
> It was noted that we are doing research in our classrooms but we aren't recording it. Practitioners are researchers and are, in many areas, ahead of researchers. Many left excited to start recording their practise. Areas of particular interest to focus research on were: gender, composition, participatory education and accountability.
>
> ...
>
> Many will be reassessing their classroom style and curriculum to increase learner centredness. "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

> “ Some discussion centred around the importance of developing first language literacy first.
>
> …
>
> I am concerned about first language literacy. What does this mean for individuals, for groups, for funding priorities? What are the social and cultural implications?
>
> …
>
> As much as possible, the students must be permitted to determine the content and direction of their study. BUT we must not lose sight of traditional views many cultures have of teachers. This change of perspective cannot occur over night.
>
> …
>
> Many people seem to be doing things research has yet to consider. ”
>
> … from Participants' Response Cards

Learning Centre outside Vancouver, B.C. which publishes *Voices, New Writers for New Readers* (reviewed in Rigg 1990).

In 1982, ten years after Murray's article, Maxine Hairston suggested that composition instruction was shifting to a process paradigm. Her discussion of the principle feature of the new paradigm included attention to intervention and discovery; concerns with audience, purpose, and occasion; evaluation with the writer's intention and audience in mind; the assumption that writing is a holistic, recursive and creative activity; and an emphasis on writing as a mode of learning as well as a communication skill.

More recent research into composition has focused on the social and cultural contexts in which the composition occurs. Edelsky's *Writing in a Bilingual Program: Habia una vez* (1986) points out that unless the writers compose for their own purposes to audiences they themselves select, the writing is inauthentic. Rose's work on writer's block (1984) and his award-winning, *Lives on the Boundary* (1989), speak clearly to the importance of one's sense of self as belonging to a group – a subculture within America – and how to identity with that subculture can affect one's literacy, both composing and reading.

Some of the most exciting recent research on composition focuses on collaboration; Bruffee (1983) has written about composing and reading as social acts and about the collaborative nature of learning and of knowledge (1984, 1986). Ede and Lunsford (1990) and Odell and Goswami (1990) recently investigated the uses of writing by non-academics, noting especially how great a role collaboration plays in real-life composing. Odell and Goswami also noted the role of electronic media. In business and at home, the personal computer is used in composing and through FAX, E-mail, and other computer networks, collaboration is the order of the day.

A New Agenda for Research: Adults as New Writers

Some options for research into the composing processes of new writers:

1. Ethnography. What environments do adult new writers read and write in? What goes on at the Adult Basic Education Centers, in volunteer literacy classes, at community colleges, in families and in social organizations? We can examine the assumptions about writing processes that these environments suggest. Fingeret's *Social Networks: A new perspective on independence and adult literates* (1983) is a forerunner of this sort of research.

2. Case studies. We can examine the writing processes of one or more individual new writers and readers in any of these environments by collecting samples, interviewing writers, and asking them to keep and share journals or progress logs on their writing. Here we might ask new writers about their assumptions about writing and reading, their goals, their sense of progress as writers.

3. Descriptive studies. We can survey large numbers of new writers and readers and attempt to quantify some of the variables involved in writing processes. We can compare the composing process of different writers, as Pianko (1979) and Perl (1980) did with college students. Pianko's (1979) comparison of skilled and unskilled writers shows that one major difference between the two is the willingness of the skilled writers to live with uncertainty and with errors as they write. Skilled writers are more willing to

keep going, not sure where their writing is taking them and they are more willing to put up with errors. The skilled writers tend not to be uncomfortable with an awkward phrase or misspelled word or vague lexical item; they know that they will fix these surface matters later, and that the important and difficult thing is to get as much as possible on paper while the generative juices are flowing. The unskilled writers tend to block at each surface problem, refusing to go on until someone spells a word for them, or abandoning the whole composition because they cannot get the first sentence just right. This sort of research needs to be carried out with adult new writers.

4. Experimental and quasi-experimental studies. With large enough populations of adult literacy students, it is possible to set up random samples, set up control and treatment groups, and test the effect of different teaching strategies and materials. Clifford's (1981) look at collaborative pedagogy is an example of this approach. In quasi-experiments, instead of randomizing the participants, we look for relationships they have to each other. Given the nature of many adult literacy classes and the harried schedule of many adult new writers and readers, the quasi- experiment would probably be a more effective approach than the experimental. Fox's (1980) look at writing apprehension is an example of this approach.

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STATISTICS CANADA WAS unable to provide an authorized written report on the data for this Conference.

REVEALING FACTS: STATISTICS CANADA'S 1990 STUDY

WHAT DOES RECENT RESEARCH ON EDUCATION LEVELS IN CANADA IMPLY FOR LITERACY WORK? JOIN A STATISTICS CANADA RESEARCHER, IN A WORKSHOP ORGANIZED BY THE MOVEMENT FOR CANADIAN LITERACY, TO ANALYZE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DATA FROM THE *SURVEY OF LITERACY SKILLS USED IN DAILY ACTIVITIES* RELEASED IN MAY 1990.

presentation by Gilles Montigny and Stan Jones

... from the Facilitator's Report

Copies of the 1990 research titled *Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities*, discussed by Stan Jones and Gilles Montigny are available from Statistics Canada. Funding for this research was provided by the National Literacy Secretariat. The survey was designed to assess directly the functional reading, writing and numeracy skills of Canada's adult population.

Only a sample of adults was surveyed, therefore there is no way to say exactly how many Canadians are in each category. So it must be kept in mind that the results of the survey provide an indication only. Statistically speaking the sample is a good one – it is random and represents accurately a cross section of the adult population. However, it did not include the Northwest Territories, Indian reservations, prison inmates or persons over age 69.

Literacy was defined as the ability to gain information from print; there was no attempt to measure reading for pleasure. The survey measured reading skills, not interest or motivation. It measured more than simply the ability to decode by measuring a continuum from decoding to integration of information. Testing included not only the text but also a meaningful task (ie. the ability to read an employee benefit eligibility chart or to find the best food price in a newspaper ad).

The researchers created a typology of four levels; then tests were created to measure the typology. In each category they attempted to identify typical kinds of texts people would encounter. The four levels are:

Level 1: Canadians at this level have difficulty dealing with printed materials. They most likely identify themselves as people who cannot read (7% of Canadians).

Level 2: Canadians at this level can use printed materials only for limited purposes such as finding a familiar word in a simple text. They would likely recognize themselves as having difficulties with common reading materials (9% of Canadians).

Level 3: Canadians at this level can use reading materials in a variety of situations provided the material is simple, clearly laid out, and the tasks involved are not too complex. While these people generally do not see themselves as having major reading difficulties, they tend to avoid situations requiring reading (22% of Canadians.)

Level 4: Canadians at this level meet most everyday reading demands. This is a large and diverse group which exhibits a wide range of reading skills (62% of Canadians).

The research produced some interesting observations:

Level 1 respondents were mainly non-English or French speakers; that is they were immigrants (7% of Canadians);

Levels 1 and 2 combined indicate very limited reading abilities (16% of Canadians);

Levels 1, 2 and 3 are combined to arrive at the 38% of Canadians with literacy problems which was referred to by John Ryan in the keynote address;

Education level completed and reading ability are generally interrelated. Seventy percent of those who completed highschool are at level 4. On the other hand, it must be kept in mind that 12% of those with elementary or no schooling at all were at level 4.

Literacy levels are higher in the Western provinces. Reading skill profiles are the same for men and women. Younger Canadians demonstrate higher reading ability than older. Level of reading ability correlates with level of income. Medium sized urban areas had the highest reading levels because of a concentration of younger families and smaller numbers of immigrants.

Regardless of assessed reading ability most respondents indicated they were satisfied with their reading ability.

> “... surprised that 92% of people reading at level 2 and 3 felt their reading skill was adequate ... low level of perceived need ... maybe those with lower skill levels aren't as anxious to receive upgrading as we would think.
>
> ...
>
> ...tendency of governments to put workplace and other literacy programs only where they think its worthwhile investment-wise – tendency to 'write off' segments of the population ... sinister implications of writing off subcultures as not requiring literacy.
>
> ...
>
> ...concern about the excluded population of prisons, Yukon, elderly, natives ...”
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

MEETING LEARNER NEEDS: PERSPECTIVES & DIRECTIONS

LEARNERS SPEAK OUT

Bram Fisher
Coordinator, Outreach Regional Literacy for Eastern Ontario
Secretary, Movement for Canadian Literacy Board member

Agnes Barnes
Coordinates literacy program in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia
Board member, Movement for Canadian Literacy

Robin Silverman
Chair of Learners' Action Group of Canada
Board member, Movement for Canadian Literacy

Jerry Lee Miller
Learners' Action Group of Canada
Outreach worker, Toronto Board of Education
Board member, Movement for Canadian Literacy

Larry Loyie
Carnegie Centre, Vancouver
Board member , Literacy B.C.
Learners' Action Group of Canada

PUENTE PROJECT: BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

Mary K. Healy
Research and training director, Puente Project
Co-editor, *English Education*, National Council of Teachers of English

Felix Galaviz
Co-director, Puente Project

Patricia McGrath
Co-director, Puente Project

TALKING ABOUT LIVES: PLANNING PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN

Jennifer Horsman
Consultant, Spiral Community Research Group, Toronto
Educator and researcher for women literacy learners, Participatory Research Group
Women's group facilitator, Parkdale Project Read
Literacy work in Canada, England, West Africa

ALBSU'S STUDENT ACCREDITATION INITIATIVE

Judith Banbury
Assistant Director, Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, England and Wales
Responsible for staff development training, Yorkshire

IN THIS SESSION the workshop began with the video on the National Learners' Training Event from Candle Lake, Saskatchewan, followed by an explanation of the development of the 'mission statement'. The video was enthusiastically received by the participants as a tool for encouraging discussion on learner participation with both students and practitioners. The topics discussed were:

1) The relationship between the tutor and student in a one-to-one tutoring situation: Agnes Barnes spoke on the need for a balance between allowing time for personal matters while still maintaining a focus on the teaching/learning of reading and writing, a central issue for the health of tutor-student work. Jerry Lee Miller spoke on the need for tutors to address issues of concern for students without trying to rectify situations in the students' lives.

2) The conference as a negative example of learner participation: Some participants expressed their agreement with the workshop presenters that the conference should have included 50% learners.

3) The need to provide training so that learners' participation is not tokenism: The example was given of inviting learners to be on boards but failing to provide support by explaining how boards work.

4) The use of the word "illiterate" suggests that one cannot read or write anything: Some suggested that the term "not literate" be used instead.

5) Funding: Welfare does not provide enough financial support for learners by limiting financial assistance to six months. This time period only provides a band-aid solution to a lifetime of problems. The welfare system does not provide enough incentives for adults to go back to school or get a job. Some suggested looking to the business community to get involved in the cause of literacy instead of going to the government for funding; this out of the fear of more educational cutbacks. However, no concrete ideas came about on how to approach this matter.

... from the Facilitator's Report

LEARNERS SPEAK OUT

Bram Fisher, Agnes Barnes, Robin Silverman, Jerry Lee Miller, Larry Loyie

HOW DO LEARNERS DEFINE THEIR OWN NEEDS? HEAR WHAT LEARNERS WANT FROM LITERACY PROGRAMS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

In May 1990, over 70 learners from across Canada gathered in Candle Lake, Saskatchewan for a national training event. It was an exciting time where participants attended a variety of workshops and got to meet learners from across the nation. As well, there were four international students in attendance.

One of the outcomes of this event was the making of the document below known as the *Mission Statement of the Learner Action Group of Canada.* This statement is dedicated to increasing the adult student/learner voice in Canadian society and the literacy movement.

It was endorsed by the majority of adult student/learners in attendance at Candle Lake. There is no doubt that much discussion and debate has to occur in order to implement many of the ideas found in the *Mission Statement.* As more people read it and have input, there may have to be changes.

However, we have a solid starting point for discussion – a point which captures the spirit of increased participation. As learners look into the nineties, they can do so with a blueprint that broadens the action to include them.

Mission Statement of the Learner Action Group of Canada

This mission statement is intended to lay the foundation of strengthening the adult student/learner voice.

Within Canadian society:

that literacy as a right be stated in the Charter of Rights;

that there is a right to education for all;

that all student/learners should be consulted on how to improve the education of children;

that the term 'illiterate' not be used in reference to any citizen or group of citizens;

that the dignity of the adult student/learners be preserved.

Within the literacy movement:

that the current one-on-one partnership for adult student /learner (or former learner) involvement be extended by 1995 to include all levels of literacy organizations — including programs, boards and networks — to ensure that we get the most out of what is available to help the largest number of people. This is to include representation on executive, personnel and finance committees, etc.;

that programs build in financial and moral support to adult student/learners who want to be involved;

that qualified adult student/learners be equally considered when paid literacy positions become available;

that adult student/learners and literacy workers exchange information about conferences and meetings;

that all literacy funding proposals allow for adult student/learner involvement;

that clear language be used in funding proposals;

that adult student/learner rights concerning confidentiality be respected.

> "Conferences such as this should include learners as planners and participants. Registration should be free for learners.
>
> ...
>
> Students don't necessarily want to 'tell their story'. They want to learn how to get involved in what's going on around them ... how to change it if they don't like it. It's a question of becoming people who are in control rather than people who are controlled.
>
> ...
>
> More effort should be made to establish 50/50 learner partnerships with instructors, administrators, and school and college boards. Practitioners must listen to learners at all stages of planning and practise.
>
> ...
>
> Learners need to be/want to be involved."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

THERE IS no detailed article from the Puente Project available to include in this publication.

For more information about the project you may contact the Puente Project, University of California, 300 Lakeside Dr., Oakland, CA, 94612-3550.

PUENTE PROJECT: BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

presentation by Mary K. Healy, Felix Galaviz and Patricia McGrath

ARE DOCUMENTED 'BARRIERS TO SUCCESS' AND DROPOUT PATTERNS AN UNFORTUNATE FACT OF COLLEGE LIFE FOR A SIZEABLE MINORITY OF STUDENTS? WOULD SOMETHING LIKE THE PUENTE PROJECT, A ONE YEAR INTENSIVE COUNSELLING/MENTORING/ WRITING PROGRAM FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS IN ACADEMIC DIFFICULTY, WORK AT YOUR COLLEGE? USE THIS EXPERIENCE TO DEVELOP A LEARNER-CENTRED INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH WHICH CAN HELP STUDENTS TURN FAILURE INTO SUCCESS.

... from the Facilitator's Report

This workshop conducted by Mary K. Healy described the Puente Project. This is a student retention project aimed at Mexican American students in the California Community College system. The program was founded in 1981. The goal of Puente, which means *bridge* in Spanish, is to increase the number of Mexican American/Latino community college students transferring to four-year colleges and universities. Funding is provided by several foundations and corporations in cooperation with the University of California and California Community Colleges.

The program involves three components: a respected instructor from the College English department; a Mexican American counsellor from the College Counselling Department who has an established network in the Mexican American community; Mexican American mentors who are established business people or workers within the community to serve as role models. The mentors donate 16 hours a year to each student.

All are involved in an extensive training session before starting the program. The English instructor and counsellor are especially important to train.

Mexican American students apply to enter the program. They may be referred by a counsellor, friend, relative or themselves. They enrol in two courses in consecutive semesters – a college preparatory writing course and a first year college writing course. In these courses they use life writing to develop writing (and reading) skills and self-confidence.

Participants in the workshop were interested in many program details. The program emphasizes writing as the vehicle to build English skills, develop self-confidence and promote success in other courses. All writing in the Prep course is self-generated based on students' own experiences and interest. Small groups give positive feedback and ask questions about the content which should be answered in the next draft. At no time does an instructor 'correct' the work during the various draft stages.

Another area of interest was the team/cooperative approach to tackling the problem. The counsellor is involved in the writing classes. The teacher and counsellor model writing and participate in the small group process.

The teacher/counsellor teams participate in extensive, residential training courses where they practise what they will teach. They are provided with ongoing support and workshops.

Especially interesting to all was the personal followup through telephone contact and possible home visits. An attempt is made to foster family support for student success. The counsellor is available to follow up and help students deal with problems.

Participants wondered how transferrable this project would be to B.C. for native students. In many ways natives share the same sense of community, disenfranchisement, and cultural isolation when they enter colleges here.

People also wondered how much of the success of this project is due to the careful screening of participants. Does this lead to elitism? What is there for the others?

Some questioned the timing of this program. Would it not be more useful to address the drop-out rate in high school?

> “I'm excited by how the self-correcting positive feedback offered in small groups develops writing skill and leads to further writing.
>
> ...
>
> People are capable of self-improvement with encouragement.
>
> ...
>
> How humane! To meet the learner where he is in his learning and help him grow as a result of caring for him and having him work with *real* information.
>
> ...
>
> ... can we relate Puente project drop-out rates to drop-out rates in ABE or the college system in general?
>
> ...
>
> We need to examine the high drop-out rates in high schools, colleges, ABE programs.
>
> ... ”
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

THIS WORKSHOP GENERATED a lot of participant discussion – especially about the unrealistic promises made by literacy programs and the oppressive trend to linking literacy education and job training.

Jennifer Horsman broke us into small groups to discuss three questions. Before posing each question she read stories from her research – quoting women who had previously been asked the same questions. What makes you feel stupid? What was the key or barrier to you getting educated? What are the possibilities and problems for the women in your programs?

Most of the group seemed to more or less agree with and recognize the answers of other group members. Many participants clearly felt affirmed and even excited by what was said.

The general theme was that the context and content of women's lives are also the context and content of their relationships to literacy possibilities. Women's experiences of physical violence, gender roles, and economic and emotional violence; women's ways of knowing, doing and relating; daycare and transportation; not being taken seriously; economic realities; time constraints; racism; ethnic and cultural limits; and health issues all must be acknowledged and incorporated into the design and delivery of literacy programs.

The participants discussed some possibilities for women in programs, notably provision of daycare and women only classes. The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) has undertaken two projects of note recently: a book reviewing literacy materials, *Good Canadian Materials for Women Learning to Read*, and a research project concerning barriers to women's participation. Many members of the group expressed an interest in networking among themselves.

... from the Facilitator's Report

TALKING ABOUT LIVES: PLANNING PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN

Jennifer Horsman

WHAT IS WOMEN'S EXPERIENCE OF 'IL/LITERACY' AND HOW DOES IT DIFFER FROM MEN'S? HOW DO WOMEN TALK ABOUT THEIR NEEDS? DRAW ON RESEARCH DATA FROM INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN LEARNERS IN THE MARITIMES AS WELL AS WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE TO LOOK AT WAYS LITERACY PROGRAMS MIGHT DEVELOP SO WOMEN'S LIVES, PERCEIVED LITERACY SKILLS AND CONCERNS CAN BE RESPONDED TO MORE FULLY.

It is not because of the statistics – the number of women that are illiterate – that we need to focus on women and literacy. We need to be concerned about women and literacy because of the nature of women's lives. We need to look at the type of training women are usually offered, in light of what they are seeking, when they participate in literacy programs. As women, and as feminists, we need to ask ourselves critical questions about our literacy practice.

I will be drawing on my experiences as a literacy worker in Toronto, Ontario, and from my research with women in rural Nova Scotia. To illustrate the issues I will relate stories told by white (and one black/native) working class women who were interviewed in rural Nova Scotia in 1986. They are as distorted as all extracts are when taken from their context, but they speak directly of these rural women's experiences.

"I'm Just Another Dumb Housewife": Stories from Nova Scotia

Many women with limited literacy skills spoke of the feeling of being told in one way or another that they were 'stupid' or 'just another dumb housewife'. Although both men and women learners often feel judged, I think women experience it in a particular way. One woman said:

> "You feel so stupid, you let on you're reading it."

I think we often interpret that as if the problem is being stupid or not being able to read rather than other peoples' views.

> "It makes you feel like a dummy. Reading and writing is an important thing in life. If you don't have it you're classified as a dummy. You get the feeling people know that you're uneducated. They treat you that way. So there's a barrier there – oh well she's not educated, she can't. I may be judged. She's unable to carry on a conversation. Maybe what's happening in the world or society. She's too stupid."

Those women are not saying "I *am* stupid", but "I know that this causes me to be judged in a certain way and then treated in a certain way." An example of this treatment came from one of the programs. The instructor said:

> "Now, there's low functioning people – they can't read a recipe. I sent them to the store to get ham. They knew ham was a kind of pinkish colour so they came back with meat and onion loaf, kind of looked like ham. Well it was fine, I could get away with the meat and onion loaf but depending on what they want, sometimes you could send them for a pork chop and they'd come back with a T-bone steak. They can't read; sending them to the grocery store, everything is foreign to them."

This may sound surprising, but it typifies the judgements the women know people make. But the women do shop, and knowing the difference between a pork chop and a T-bone steak is not a matter of reading. Probably those women were not familiar with pork chops or T-bone steaks. But cultural or class differences are treated as if they are issues of literacy.

Jose spoke of the impact of a teacher's judgement:

> "There's one teacher she's got there. She said to me, my daughter wrote a project and some of the words she misspelled and some of the words she forgot to dot her *i* so they looked like *e*. Well, she must have had a hard day. When I came in she said: Well couldn't you help your daughter with her projects? Didn't you read it to make sure all the words were correct? I just looked at her coz in another way she's saying: Are you a dummy or what?"

She had a very strong sense of herself, so she could say:

> "I'm not stupid. I tell them, 'If you think I'm stupid I'm not.' I say 'I can think.' I say 'I understand.'"

Perhaps she would feel less confident to challenge the way the school is treating her children because the discourse of the school tells her that she is the one who is in the wrong. This then alters how she will interact with the school.

The schools assume a middle class form of parenting and resources. If you don't have those resources at that time, if you are a single mother or a black mother, you know that you are always in the wrong. You can participate in the school only on their terms.

Barb felt that the program itself was telling her she was stupid. At age eleven she left school to look after her siblings. As there was a task to be done at home, her father saw that as more essential than schooling. When, knowing she was pregnant, the tutor tried to make the lessons relevant by bringing in material on pregnancy, Barb felt insulted:

> "If she hadn't found out I was pregnant I don't think she'd have brought information on pregnancy in. But I had a younger brother; I looked after him since the day he was born and I told her that. But she figured because I didn't have that much of a grade in school I didn't know anything about how to look after an infant, a baby or anything else like that. I told her that I'd looked after Peter the day he came home from hospital. I admit I can't read very good, I can read but there are some words that I can't figure out what they are. But I know she thinks I should read these pamphlets on childcare, I should have to read these but I don't have to read anything to look after a child."

Programs often try to make the material appropriate to women in terms of stereotyped women's roles of caring for children. These areas that women have devoted time to and are able to do well may even be why they are illiterate. Offering such material confirms that child rearing is women's responsibility alone and that they should feel guilty if they fail to do it adequately. Women both hear themselves being called stupid and see that same message in the curriculum content chosen to be relevant to women's lives.

It is important that women think they are being treated as stupid because that in itself has an effect. Many women, even with higher education levels, can think of situations where we were assumed to be stupid or were unable to do something right, and know how that judgment alters how we act in that situation. If we experience prejudice because of racism, ablism, homophobia as well as sexism, this experience may be even more acute. Women with limited literacy skills have the experience compounded.

"I Could've Went Back to School": Stories from Nova Scotia

Our experience as women tells us that the image that women do not get to programs because they are not motivated is inadequate. It does not reflect the reality of our lives. Although women's families are seen as central to the curriculum for women, they are ignored when we talk about why women are not in the programs. There is a language about people not getting to programs or dropping out, based on motivation which we need to question often. Even the women themselves often speak into that language.

Dorothy had eight children, one of whom had had a serious illness, and she worked twelve hour night shifts at a factory as well as took care of the children in the day. But she said:

> "I could've went back to school and took some kind of an upgrading, I could've. I thought about it, but then the children were all small and I never did get around to it, but I usually say you shouldn't use that for an excuse. There could've been somebody to look after them, it's no excuse at all really."

She suggests that if she had just tried hard enough she could have managed one more thing! But I recognize the material circumstances that would have made it hard:

> "Well I had three small ones right after the other; they were just like steps and stairs. I'm sorry now I didn't go to school. I often wish that I could go back, but you can't turn the years back."

Women's lives are rarely organized around their own needs. Instead they are 'disorganized' around everybody else's needs – their children and the demands of the school, their spouse, and the demands of their workplaces.

Men often make it hard for women to go to class. Jill explained:

> "Being married you're there to cook and clean, look after the kids if you have them, look after the housework, but I always thought you'd get out too, you'd do things together. Like I don't believe a wife should go out, like a lot of them will go out to bars; I would never do anything like that. But we didn't have any life at all … I never got through with it...just the studying … nobody would leave me alone long enough to study, between my daughter and my husband. He didn't really think that was such a hot idea either. I think he was afraid that I would get a higher income than him … Once I went out and worked and it lasted a week. I had no transportation and he just wouldn't let me do it … I had to go in with him in the morning and after a week he didn't like it, so I quit."

Many of the women talked about men's influence which stopped them taking a course, both in terms of time and emotional pressure. Many of the stories were

“ Literacy teaching as social work - I swear I spend 80% of my time as a social worker (not a complaint, a reality of the work). We need to look at all the facets of this job … blah! blah!. Sorry – it's very exhausting.

…

Many expressed concern that literacy education, when tagged to job training and prescribed, often short, periods of financial support from CEC and MSSH, necessarily leads to training women for the most easily accessible jobs ie. pink collar, low wage, little upward mobility.

…

A wonderful group. So much work to be done. A lot of people working together with the same goals and concerns. Wonderfully reassuring. ”

… from Participants' Response Cards

> " I am discouraged by the state of the social/economic context in which we work – as women, as feminists. How can we support poor women, ethnic women, ourselves as practitioners in the political scene in B.C. Lots of anger and frustration surfaced during this 'safe' workshop.
>
> …
>
> The more we deal with female literacy the more we find that primary in women's (especially disadvantaged women's) educational needs is the sexual, physical and emotional abuse which they have experienced … Until we deal with social problems we cannot do more than skate on the surface of women's literacy. "
>
> … from Participants' Response Cards

experiences of direct violence. Having left her husband, Jill said:

> "If I'd have stayed, even now if I was to come back, I think I'd end up in a nut house because you can't just live with no social life, no communication, you just can't do it."

The media images about illiteracy are always about 'death-in-life', peopled 'chained' or 'imprisoned' or 'disabled'. Jill perhaps would have said death-in-life was the perfect description of her life before she left her husband, but literacy or illiteracy is by no means the only cause of her problems. Yet illiteracy is often offered as if it is the problem and the suggestion is that if women can only work at their literacy, their lives will be transformed. Obviously for some it is a way out, yet in itself it is certainly not going to change many of the circumstances in women's lives.

Another aspect of many women's lives, which affects their possibility of pursuing their education, is the children. Women are assumed to be totally responsible, whether single parents or not. Judy's husband was supportive:

> "Well, I'm really lucky. Even like at nights when I can't be bothered even with my own kids, which happens, he puts them into bed and says, 'let your mother alone, let her study' which I find is really good … and for tutoring and stuff he'll even babysit."

It is not usual for a mother to be spoken about as babysitting – that language indicates that the man is taking over the woman's job while she is not available.

The support of friends can help a woman get to a program. Women might share the cost of petrol or simply offer support. If you have been told you are stupid all your life, a friend's encouragement can be crucial. When one woman drops out, then probably the others will too. Both will be judged as not motivated – not serious students.

Problems and Possibilities: Stories from Nova Scotia and Ontario

We often think of illiteracy as the cause of women's problems – their isolation, lack of a job, or lack of adequate income. But it's important to question the societal choices we often take for granted. If illiteracy is not the problem in the way it is often assumed to be, then literacy probably is not going to fulfil its promise either. But if women are experiencing many problems and literacy is offered as the passport to a changed life, then many will seek it.

Susan was quite clear why she was in the literacy program:

> "I'd like to have a career that I really want to do, not something you have to do because you need to live. And … further myself and some day be the president or be the owner of a company, instead of always sitting down there being $4.50, $5.00 an hour. And I feel if you have a good job your life has a little more meaning to it, I really do, instead of this I don't know what I'm doing. My life has no meaning, other than getting up, going to school, looking after her, but if I had something to get up to in the morning, dress nice for, go out and meet the world, meet the … everyday kind of life … the things that go on in life that you need to handle. This way the least little thing gets you down because you don't go nowhere, you don't do nothing. If I had a

> good job I could have a nice little home and do things that most parents do … Where can you go if you're here on mother's assistance? … But if I furthered myself and got to do something that I'd like to do and worked hard enough at it ... I think its going to pay off in the long run. "

Programs not only did not fulfil many of those promises, instead they often reinserted women into the status quo. They prepared women for exactly the sort of jobs women traditionally carry out. These programs do offer a course that might increase a woman's chance of getting a job but they also fit them into their traditional gender roles.

Instead of being helped to free themselves from traditional expectations of femininity which can contribute to trapping women in the home, confirming the importance of an evaluation of their worth based on appearance, and limiting the jobs which it seems appropriate for women to do, training programs frequently reinforce these values. Women are taught anger management and success is described in terms of appearance. Concern with appearance and attitude may seem appropriate because such things can help the trainees get jobs. However, this stress can reinforce traditional values and encourage women to accept gender roles and consequent limitations.

The promise of literacy for many of the women is that taking part in a program will lead to qualifications which will enable them to get work and leave the house regularly. But, literacy students are often excluded from upgrading and basic training programs. The minimum demand that many women have, to get out of the house, to reduce their isolation, and to share their experiences with other women, is not met when literacy programs offer only individual tutoring at home. This may seem to address the practical problems women often have in attending classes. However, this "solution" leaves the social organization of women's lives not only unchanged but also unchallenged. Unless opportunities to interact with other participants are structured into programs, women are denied even the minimal promise of literacy – to get out of the house and make some social contact.

Women seek a changed life. Often they look for meaning through the literacy program, the challenge to think of something other than their daily life. But this dream is not fulfilled when programs prepare women to fulfil their roles better and embed them more firmly in their everyday world. Women are offered "functional" skills for the life they lead: to write their shopping lists, cheques, letters to family. Some women wanted to learn these things but many were asking for meaning in their lives but were offered how to write a cheque.

Although women hoped that programs would fulfill the promise of a changed life, they knew that the chances that literacy would fulfill this promise were slim, but felt that at least it was better than doing nothing.

Although the picture may look bleak, I think as feminists we have also tried to make some changes to programs. We have been trying to have more discussion groups so that programs can be a place where women can talk critically about their lives. As feminists in community literacy programs we have espoused the importance of acknowledging women's strengths and recognizing the complexity of women's lives. We have not started from a deficit model about literacy learners, a notion that they are stupid or failed to read because they lacked motivation. We have sought to respond to the conditions of women's lives with flexible programming.

We have begun to focus on the need for supports such as childcare, but our funding constraints have frequently limited our attempts to put this in place. I think we have tried to provide a place that supports challenging the status quo – a place for discussion rather than reinserting women.

"I'm reinforced in my perception that the processes in learning – the support, etc. – are more critical than the *content*.

…

The need for literacy workers themselves to speak out *politically* … because the obstacles to literacy learners and their expectations can only be met by major social changes.

…

How much can the literacy worker take on? We need to be honest with what a course can do for our students … "

... from Participants' Response Cards

BANBURY PRESENTED A HISTORY of the development of the student accreditation certificate called Wordpower currently being used in England and Wales. The four certificate levels are valued by both students and employers as credits towards higher certification and a national certifying board.

The certificates are offered by local adult education programs or by individual tutors if they are allied with a recognized program. The certification program includes aspects of written language, reading, and oral competence.

The record of competencies is kept by the tutor/teacher and the student can choose when s/he is ready to have the work assessed. There is no particular order to the tasks and the student can take as much time as is needed to complete the certificate. The curriculum is not fixed and can be adjusted for the interests of the student. During the time the student is working towards this certificate an outside assessor (not linked to the institution) visits the program to determine whether the guidelines are being appropriately followed.

Once the record of work is completed, the certifying board determines whether the student will receive the certificate.

It was apparent that the British system of education is so different from the Canadian one, that many participants were having difficulty relating to the concept of certification. For example, the British educational system is historically entirely responsible for certification. These examining bodies are not part of the educational institutions or the government. Banbury had to go into some detail about this system in order for participants to understand how and why this certification process might have meaning for the learners.

It seemed the audience was interested in the accreditation but had problems trying to conceive how this model might work in Canadian settings. More work about the concept of student accreditation needs to be developed in literacy programs. This model of using a non-test related certification system seems particularly appealing.

... from the Facilitator's Report

ALBSU'S STUDENT ACCREDITATION INITIATIVE

Judith Banbury

DO LEARNERS BENEFIT FROM STUDENT ACCREDITATION OR WOULD A PUBLICALLY RECOGNIZED BASIC SKILLS CERTIFICATE BECOME ONE MORE HOOP TO JUMP FOR LEARNERS AND INSTRUCTORS? COMPARE CURRENT ARTICULATION CONCEPTIONS AND PRACTISES TO ALBSU'S BASIC SKILLS ACCREDITATION INITIATIVE WHERE CORE LEARNING MATERIALS TO SUPPORT THE LEARNER CERTIFICATE AS WELL AS INSTRUCTOR TRAINING ARE PROVIDED BY ALBSU THROUGHOUT ENGLAND AND WALES.

The Basic Skills Accreditation Initiative is a joint venture bringing together the BBC, the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU) with the Department of Education and Science, and the Training Agency. The overeaching aim of the Initiative is to improve communication skills and numeracy of an estimated six million people in the adult population whose basic skills let them down either at work or in life generally.

The Initiative's main components are: to develop and publicize new qualifications which will be nationally recognised; to encourage people to learn through BBC television and radio programmes and through specially commissioned print material; the creation of a referral service putting people in touch with local learning opportunities including 60 new Open Learning Centres; to assist tutors and trainers by providing resource material.

The Accreditation Framework: City and Guilds Wordpower Certificate

What is it?

The new City and Guilds Certificate in Communication Skills is based on individual units, each of which is made up of a number of elements with associated performance criteria. These performance criteria provide statements of what someone has to do to demonstrate an accepted degree of competence in each reading, writing, listening or talking activity; although in real life things are not so clear cut. Communication is a pervasive and fluid process. In carrying through a particular activity you will often find yourself involved in processes which included a number of different units. For example, you might be making a telephone call that requires you to relay information from a previously read text which requires you to make a note of the content of the call and follow up the call with a letter.

Each unit is made up of a number of elements with performance criteria: describes the use of a set of skills in action; seeks to define the standard for performance; describes whole actions, not parts.

A unit is not a description of the skills of reading, writing, listening and talking. The units describe what the skills do, not what they are. It therefore complements rather than replaces a skills approach.

What subject matter can be used?

The Wordpower Certificate provides a framework for accreditation. It is not a course with a fixed syllabus. The learner can choose the context within which competence is demonstrated. That context could be a vocational one or one concerned with home-based activity, or could be the process of studying for a course. The guidelines to the certificate will give examples of contexts but these examples will not be inclusive. What level is the certificate aimed at?

The certificate will be at four different levels. Initially, guidelines for assessment and exemplar material will only be available for a Foundation and Stage 1 certificate. The levels will be differentiated by the relative complexity of the materials and the situations where the performance criteria have to be demonstrated. Guidelines for Stage 2 and Stage 3 will be available soon.

Do you have to gain credit in all the units before being awarded a certificate?

There are 13 separate units within the accreditation framework. Not all of these are represented in the foundation level of the certificate. Candidates can also be issued with a Record of Achievement for any individual unit. It will be possible for someone to be awarded a full certificate at foundation level with a Record of Achievement that they have reached other attainment levels in some units.

How can you register for the certificate?

Any organization wishing to offer the new City and Guilds certificate has to be approved as a centre by City and Guilds.

The following organizations will need to obtain approval:

a) All organizations without a City and Guilds centre number;

b) All organizations with a centre number for other City and Guilds qualifications unless they come directly under Local Education Authority control.

How is the certificate assessed?

The certificate will be assessed by the learner's tutor or trainer and moderated by a City and Guilds panel of external assessors. The purpose of the assessment is to ensure that the learner has met the performance criteria required for a unit. Assessment can take place in the workplace or in the centre. The assessment schedule, which will be available in the guidelines, is applied in exactly the same way no matter where the assessment takes place.

Why has the certificate has been developed in this form?

The nature and language of qualifications is changing and this new certificate has been developed to reflect some of those changes. It results from a series of investigations and consultations over the last year undertaken by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit and the Training Agency to establish the kind of qualification which seems most useful for learners in education or training. It seeks to provide a qualification which can be pursued in either vocational or non-vocational settings and which can be transferable from one to the other.

The new certificate partly reflects developments in primary and secondary education where the new National Curriculum provides explicit learning outcomes.

It partly reflects changes in the world of vocational qualifications where the National Council for Vocational Qualifications has set itself the task of rationalizing the many qualifications which relate to performance at work. These qualifications are being redesigned or newly developed to express the concept of competence in employment to credit what someone is able to do and measure someone's performance according to predetermined standards. A qualification in communication skills cannot be a vocational qualification in itself. Communication skills relate to a myriad of activities. The research that has been undertaken to arrive at this certificate has involved identifying the key communication processes which contribute to people's ability to perform both life and work roles adequately.

BBC Programmes 1989-90

The aims of the programmes are: to help people improve their basic skills; to encourage people to think about how they use communication and numeracy, to pursue learning opportunities, and to seek accreditation for their skills; to refer people to learning opportunities; and to provide resources for tutors and trainers.

Television

a) *Stepping Up* is a series of eight motivational programmes to be shown on BBC-1 on Sunday evenings. These programmes are intended to be of interest to a general audience of between five and eleven million. They aim to encourage people to think about communication skills and to attract potential learners to other parts of the Initiative.

b) *Step Up to Wordpower* is a series of twenty programmes which will first be shown on BBC-1 on Sunday mornings. An audience of between one and two million can be anticipated. These programmes look in detail at aspects of writing, reading, talking and listening, and aim to develop strategies to enable the Initiative's target audience to become more skilful communicators.

Radio

Using Your Wordpower is a series for tutors and trainers which is designed to show good practice in developing reading, writing, listening and talking skills with learners. It also aims to provide guidance on appropriate methods for assessing learning outcomes linked to the new accreditation framework.

Wordpower Stories (provisional title) is a series of six programmes within which stories developed for new or hesitant adult readers will be read.

Each programme will also suggest ways these stories could be used as teaching material with learners, as well as looking at other kinds of writing. It is hoped that some of these stories will be written by the Initiative's target group.

Local radio will run short promotional programmes which are being produced as core material to be distributed to all BBC local radio stations. Local radio stations will then supplement this material to give it a local dimension.

Support Materials

A sixteen page leaflet: *Stepping up to Wordpower* will be sent out to any prospective learner who contacts the referral service. Copies will also be made available to those providing learning opportunities.

Study material to accompany the television programmes has been produced in two formats:

1) A BBC workbook, *Step Up to Wordpower* is available through bookshops.

2) An ALBSU workpack in loose leaf form with ring binders gives additional guidance to those who wish to enrol for the City and Guilds certificate.

Notes for tutors and trainers will be available which accompany the radio series *Using Your Wordpower.*

Wordpower Stories will be available as books and on cassette.

Guidelines for the City and Guilds certificate are being published.

Publicity

Posters are being produced which will be distributed to basic skills providers as well as to public information points such as libraries and job centres. Other publicity is being sought through the press and through the BBC's own broadcasting output.

Referral

A free telephone number came into operation in September 1989. The number is publicised during the *Stepping Up* programmes and at the end of each programme. It is also publicised through the *Step Up To Wordpower* programmes and through other broadcast publicity. This telephone service is staffed continuously 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The service is available over the entire period that the television series are broadcast.

Each caller will be sent a copy of the 16 page leaflet *Stepping Up To Wordpower* and a letter giving local information on where to get help, where to follow up the certificate and on communication skills courses.

Local Learning Opportunities

The Initiative has sent out a pro forma requesting information on local learning opportunities so that details can be included in the data base being built up for the referral service.

> " I liked that courses are geared towards interest rather than literacy ... recognizing literacy as a part of a bigger agenda.
>
> ...
>
> ...how students can have a role in setting the goals of the assessment. "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

REACHING OUT:
LITERACY & THE COMMUNITY

BREAKING THE STIGMA/RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES: SWEDEN

Kjell Rubenson
Director, Centre for Policy Studies in Education, University of British Columbia
Expert in international policy on literacy and Swedish education
Consultant, Canada/Sweden

READ-WRITE: KINGSTON, ONTARIO

Carynne Arnold
Coordinator, Kingston Literacy
Community literacy worker since 1978

HACKNEY LEARNING CENTRE: LONDON, ENGLAND

Althea Williams
Coordinator, Hackney Adult Education Institute
Literacy trainer and support worker for teachers and volunteers

REGINA LIBRARY'S LITERACY TUTORS: SASKATCHEWAN

Lorraine Hladik
Head of Adult Services at Regina Public Library
Responsible for literacy programming, Regina Public Library

COMBINING PRACTICE & THEORY IN COMMUNITY LITERACY

Elaine Gaber-Katz and Gladys Watson
Educators, researchers and writers on literacy
Authors of *Community-based Literacy: An Emerging Practise and Theory*

APPLYING FREIRE, RE-THINKING CONCEPTIONS: QUEBEC

Pierre Simard
Literacy worker
Activist, Régroupement des Groupes Populaires d'Alphabétisation

PROMOTING LEARNER-DRIVEN PROGRAMS

Sally McBeth
Coordinator, East End Literacy
Educator/writer on literacy issues

RUBENSON BEGAN BY PROVIDING a comparison between the Swedish experience and the Canadian from an historical perspective. In Sweden the notion is that the state has the responsibility of providing an equal standard of living for all through social policies.

In Sweden the level of ambition and commitment was high to create a demand for literacy education. The choice of who carried out the activity and where it occurred was also important. Finally, the support for coordination between the agents was provided.

In Sweden the union movement is much more powerful than here and the unions were involved from the outset.

Furthermore, in Sweden obstacles to students wanting to return to school were identified and addressed by a Royal Commission. The findings of this commission served as the basis for the structure of ABE programs. Institutional obstacles (access, content, admission rules, and finance), situational obstacles (time, job commitments, child care) and psychological obstacles (attitudes to study and self-esteem) were all confronted.

Funding was provided for the initial studies and all levels of programming. Diverse groups worked together, collectively conducting the research and applying for funding.

Rubenson had several suggestions for Canada. We must build "political links" and work more collaboratively in petitioning for funding and programs. We must develop a cohesive strategy for ABE, locally, provincially, and nationally. Target the collective rather than the individual.

The ensuing discussion centred on Rubenson's suggestions for collaborative approaches and the need to identify and address the obstacles that potential students encounter.

... from the Facilitator's Report

BREAKING THE STIGMA/RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES: SWEDEN

Kjell Rubenson

ARE MASS MEDIA CAMPAIGNS THE ONLY WAY TO HEIGHTEN PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ILLITERACY OR ARE THERE OTHER WAYS TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR ADULTS TO ADMIT THEY CAN'T READ? INVESTIGATE SWEDISH ADULT EDUCATION RECRUITMENT 'OUTREACH' STRATEGIES, FIRST DEVELOPED IN THE 1970'S, WHICH USE VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS LIKE LOCAL UNIONS AND CHURCHES TO ACT AS 'LINKS' BETWEEN POTENTIAL LEARNERS AND EXISTING PROGRAMS.

In the Swedish government's ambitious attempts to achieve greater equality of standards of living, adult education came to be viewed as a key instrument and was awarded a prominent position in public policy during the seventies.

The Ideological Roots of the Outreach Program

The radical adult education policy of the 1970's was an outcome of the Labour movement's struggle for a democratization of the Swedish society and grew out of the general radicalization of the trade union movement at the end of the 1960's. The Labour movement did not simply focus on economic conditions but also took into account its members' social and cultural situations. The goal was to achieve a democratization of political and cultural life that paralleled changes in working life. The crucial issue for adult educators and policy makers was how to come to terms with existing bias in the recruitment to adult education and increase participation of those from disadvantaged groups, e.g. adult illiterates. In the reform package that was introduced a comprehensive program for outreach activities was one of the cornerstones. The purpose of this presentation is to provide some understanding of the Swedish strategy. I will start by providing a short background to the overall reform in adult education as well as outline the major components of the strategy. With this as a base I will examine the outreach program, discuss underlying assumptions, and point to the strengths and weaknesses in the Swedish model.

In official letters to the government ABF (The Workers Educational Association) and LO (The Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions) demanded two things regarding adult education: first, that the government set up a committee to carry on experimental study aimed at trying various outreach models to increase participation in adult education of the under-educated; and second, that the then sitting committee on adult study finance be given additional instructions to act for those with less than nine years of education.

The government reacted promptly to the demands from LO and ABF. In Government Bill 1970:35 a change of action was announced: the Bill stated that in further reforms of adult education one of the more important issues to be addressed would be how to reach those who had little or insufficient education. The state's altered ways of acting in adult education matters can, using Korpi's theory on power-mobilization, be seen as a reflection of the increasing political power of the trade-union. According to this theory the measures taken by the state can be viewed as a manifestation of the distribution of power resources between the most imporant collectives or classes in society.

Government strategy was to address the bias in recruitment through a comprehensive package of measures that covered several sectors of society. In addition to powerful reinforcement of the general resources for adult education, this policy included social benefits for adult students, the introduction of subsidies for outreach activities and a law on the right to study leave. Later followed a law on adult basic education, making it obligatory for local authorities to provide this form of education as well as developing strategies for reaching the illiterates. The policy was based on previous measures which had shown that to increase the participation to groups of limited means it is necessary to support recruitment as well as to offer new forms of education. Support need not be financial alone; it can be any form of compensatory action aimed at helping the disadvantaged to overcome their psychological and situational obstacles to study. Ultimately, recruitment was and remains an issue of creating demand for education among groups traditionally disinclined to study. The outreach activities were intended to serve as an instrument to bring about the desired change of attitudes in the target population. If success were achieved, study assistance would then guarantee the target group the very real possibility of continuing their education.

Experimenting with Outreach Activities

The decision to introduce specially earmarked funding for outreach activities was based on an extensive research and development program. As the experiences from these experiments provide a good insight into what it takes to create a successful outreach program a short summary of the main results will be provided.

Few, if any, Nordic adult educational experiments have aroused as much attention internationally as the experimental programme FÖVUX pursued with outreaching activity. Trying to interest people in adult education through personal contact is, of course, not new; on the contrary, it has a long history in Nordic popular adult education. The new feature which arrived with FÖVUX is that the outreaching activity is given a more established form and organization on the basis of earmarked state funds to act as a recruitment model. During three years FÖVUX conducted controlled experiments to test whether outreaching activities at the workplace would result in a significant increase in participation of disadvantaged groups. The results were astonishing and showed that 40 percent of those contacted actually started a course and further that 2 out of 3 that started had never participated in any form of adult education.

The enormous success of the FÖVUX activity resulted in a gigantic experimental activity not only in Sweden but also in the other Nordic countries. To provide an idea of the multitude of projects which must have been carried out, the Swedish National Board of Education's research programme in housing areas '76-'78 included no less that 136 local projects. Table 1 (see over page) summarizes the results from some Swedish experiments.

...

It is evident from Table 1 that FÖVUX has been considerably more successful than all other experiments. The differences in success rate can be understood in terms of: level of ambition; where the activity is carried out; and the coordination between different study agents.

Level of Ambition

The fundamental dividing line goes between outreaching activity as a short-term tool for recruitment and as a long-term instrument for giving the individual as fair a chance as possible of judging whether he/she should commence some form of studies. In some cases, e.g. experiment 3 in Table 1, the allocated time available is so short that the

Table 1: Experiences from a few Swedish experiments with outreaching activities

	N c	Proportion the study agent talked to	Proportion interested	Proportion beginning a course	Time per visit $\bar{x}$ mins.	Cost per contact (Sw crowns)	Cost per conversation	Education for the study agent, days
FÖVUX (study circles in priority subjects, average result per year)	(total) 4000	_1)	50	40	45	20	40	5
The Kronoberg project (study circles, municipal adult education and higher education)	1600		38	-	-	-	-	-
NBE 1973 comprehensive school studies in municipal adult education & priority circles		33	14	7	7	10	30	1/2
SAMVUX (no courses offered directly)	2400	73	20	-	24	40	55	5
NBE research programme in housing areas (study circles)								1/2-3
year 2	40000	-	18	13	21	-	-	
year 3	60000	-	23	18	31	-	-	

procedure could be regarded as 'a verbalized brochure method'. Those that can profit from it are people who already have some inclination to study and many of them would register anyway. The procedure provides no opportunity to deal with psychological obstacles that keep illiterates away from education.

The experience from Sweden is that the strategy should not be to recruit as many as possible in the short term, as this results in a campaign model where the most disadvantaged will be left out. Instead it is crucial that a long-term strategy be developed where a trust is being gradually established between the one doing the outreach and those being contacted. This means a departure from the short-term campaign with its stress on information to a long-term model built on a communicative process. This change has major consequences for the training of study organizers. The success of FÖVUX is a consequence of a high level of ambition, i.e. abundant time, well-educated study organizers, etc.

Different Forms of Outreaching Activity

It is usual to distinguish between outreaching activity in housing areas and at workplaces. Outreaching activities at workplaces are possible in Sweden where labour market legislation gives the trade unions the possibility of pursuing the activity during working hours. In the Kronoberg project (no.2 in Table 1) as well as in FÖVUX, the main part of the activity was conducted at workplaces. Judging from the number recruited it is obvious that the greatest success has been achieved at workplaces. Several interacting factors contribute to this.

In housing areas the study organizers quite simply do not get hold of everyone. Another reason is that the groups who are outside the labour market are often the really disadvantaged and hard-to-recruit groups. (Labour market participation in Sweden is as high as around 82 percent both among women and men). Particularly exposed groups are people on early retirement pensions and the long-term unemployed. Other groups are immigrants, the handicapped and those working in the home.

A fundamental difference is that the contact within housing areas is directed at the individual while contact at the workplace is collective. The working group functions as a crucial member group among manual workers. The success of FÖVUX depends partly on the fact that the outreaching activity has included the overwhelming majority of the work group thus affecting not only the individual but also one of his/her most significant member-groups.

For obvious reasons, it is more difficult to build on the target group's member and reference groups where outreaching activity in the housing areas is concerned. However, this is possible to some extent. As a result of the experiences from the R&D that was conducted, funding is now being provided directly to organizations of immigrants and handicaps in order for these to conduct outreach work. This has proven to be particularly successful in recruiting illiterates and the municipalities responsible for adult basic education increasingly rely on member organizations for identifying and recruiting the target group. It should also be mentioned that in order to reach the illiterates the municipalities in their strategy have set up a system whereby those most likely to come into contact with illiterates, e.g. employment exchanges, police, nurses and the mailman, have the responsibility to inform them about the opportunities for adult basic education.

Coordination

As more educational institutions, voluntary groups and others got involved in reaching the target groups an increasing number of problems surfaced with co-operation in outreaching activities. The experience as far as co-operation is concerned is not too good. Further, when providers and/or unions do their own

Figure 1: Campaign model

Voluntary education organization alternatively trade union	Outreaching activity to target group with a certain provision	discussion study organizer person contacted	possible registration for a course

Figure 2: Feedback model for outreaching activities

Voluntary education organization alternatively trade union	outreaching activity with a particular provision	discussion study organizer person contacted possible registration for a course	organized feed-back of the information to the organization possible changes concerning provisions and other circumstances	New Contacts

outreaching they tend to promote their own offerings and do not mention the alternatives which are available to the target group.

A Critical Reflection

Despite the good results achieved in the Swedish model of outreaching activities there is reason to assert that so far the advantage of the model has not been fully exploited. My criticism is that too often the strategy develops into a campaign model instead of a feedback model. It has become very evident that the ambition of outreaching work at the local level is dependent on how the goals of the educational policies, as they were formulated by Parliament and Government, are interpreted. Various studies have shown that the goals have not been analyzed sufficiently at the local level. The design of the subsidy system is probably the strongest tool of directing the level of ambition and connects the latter to the goals. A general character of subsidy makes it difficult for organizations to reach the equality goal. As they cannot compensate for the increased costs involved in recruiting the underprivileged, they will be forced to concentrate on other groups. Consequently, the resources for outreaching activities have been made available to unions and/or educational institutions only after they have submitted an approved plan indicating target groups and training of study organizers.

> “Who is doing what to build community strength, working together, putting differences aside in order to get organized and political? We need a cohesive strategy so duplication stops.
>
> …
>
> The aspects of this model which most interested people were: the creation of outreach programs with a built-in feedback mechanism; the financial commitment of government to development and programming; that students are paid to go to school.
>
> …
>
> The consensus was that we need funding.
>
> …
>
> … the importance of bringing the players together around the same political agenda and developing a more collaborative approach to lobbying government.
>
> …
>
> The outreach methods being more collective than individual, because that way the demand becomes stronger.
>
> …
>
> Building political links among groups that represent (or purport to represent) constituents who need literacy education. A strong coalition of literacy practitioners, learners and constituencies … could have tremendous political force in demanding funding to support literacy efforts and in shaping a progressive perspective on literacy education.
>
> …
>
> ...the Swedish strategy for bringing all the players involved together around the same political agenda.”
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

A GREAT DEAL OF DISCUSSION went on during this interactive workshop. Conversations revolved around the following points:

Intergenerational language experience programs and follow-ups: Discussions and idea sharing was a major part of the conversation. Examples of ideas generated were: learner written books, videos, plays, themes, display materials and methods of reaching out to parents by supplying easy reading materials to low-income homes.

Community resources: The question of how one can access them was discussed. The use of public libraries, for instance, necessitates that the library co-sponsor the program; however, this does not necessarily mean that the library is charging for the room or has any input into the programs. In addition to libraries, community groups and local businesses are good community resources; they could be asked to supply donations of various materials or expertise. For example, cable TV companies could send a volunteer camera person to video a production. Another example is that local businesses or newspapers could supply inexpensive or free binding of books, cash donations or donations of advertising space.

Volunteer tutors versus paid staff: Discussion was centred around trained and untrained volunteers. The value of both was largely accepted; however, most participants agreed that some sort of training or mentor system should be set up in order to maintain quality tutoring.

Funding possibilities: The discussions compared B.C. and Ontario government funding systems. Everyone was in agreement when one participant suggested that the present B.C. government policies do not supply enough funding for literacy programs. There is a definite need for monies; the possibilities for programs in B.C. are endless but there is simply no money allocated.

... from the Facilitator's Report

READ-WRITE: KINGSTON, ONTARIO

Carynne Arnold

CAN LITERACY PROGRAMMING EXTEND BEYOND TYPICAL SETTINGS AND THEMES? CHALLENGE TRADITIONAL VIEWS WITH ONE OF CANADA'S 1989 EXEMPLARY PROGRAMS, READ-WRITE, WHICH WORKS WITH PRE-SCHOOLERS AND PARENTS IN HOUSING COMPLEXES, WITH LEARNERS WHO WRITE AND PERFORM THEIR OWN DRAMA, AND WITH SPECIAL-INTEREST READING INSTRUCTION GROUPS LIKE THE "COUNTRY AND WESTERN SIGHT WORDS" ONE.

Group Activities in a One-to-One Tutoring Program

Kingston Literacy is a non-profit community organization which has been providing literacy tutoring since 1977. The foundation of the program is a strong volunteer one-to-one tutoring program. It served over 215 adults in 1989-90. In our search for new ways to meet student needs, we have set up several small group activities which have been very successful. We hope that our experiences will be useful to other literacy programs developing new activities.

Meeting the Needs of Beginning Readers

A major goal for the past four years was to identify better ways to meet the needs of beginning readers. We found that one-to-one tutoring was not providing enough class time for many of our beginning readers. For these students, tutor turnover was high. This meant that staff time for student assessment, individual program design and aiding volunteers was needed for tutoring and rematching long-term students. It was important to find a new approach for beginning readers learning at a slow pace. Many of these students had never gone to a 'regular school' and said that they would enjoy trying a group. We hoped that the new group activities would replace the one-to-one tutoring for some of these students. Over the past three years, we have added two new group activities to our program based on a whole language approach.

Sight Words Country Style

Bram Fisher was the first to meet this challenge. He discovered that most of these students enjoyed Country music. An examination of many songs showed that a high percentage of the 300 most common words occurred frequently. The group started with three members and three more joined during the first year. The design of this group's activities is simple and effective. The students bring in songs that they enjoy to the session. After listening to several songs, the group decides which ones they want to learn. The song is written in large print on chart paper and typed so each student has a copy of the music and words for use at home. In Session 1 the students sing the song several times and later read the song from the chart. In Session 2 the group reviews the song then concentrates on identifying sight words in the song. Using their list of the three hundred most common words (in alphabetical order), they identify the words from the song that are on that list. The students identify and underline these words on the chart and make word cards. In Session 3 the group leader prints the song on chart paper leaving blanks where the sight words belong. The students identify which of the missing words fits in the blanks. As each sentence is completed, the students read it out loud.

Periodically, the group makes sentences using the words and writes a story incorporating all the words. They also enjoy games such as *Wheel of Fortune.* When the students have shown that they can read the words in context and spell the words they receive a certificate. We have found that spelling the words is a barrier for many students who are very anxious to get their certificate.

As the group starts its third year and its thirty first song, three of the original group members are still coming. Recognizing how much many of our students seem to enjoy singing, we plan to incorporate singing in more activities, gradually building up a program repertoire of favourite songs.

The Tuesday Troop

Many of our beginning readers also have a very limited knowledge of the world around them. We know that information we bring to the text plays a critical role in understanding what we read. Thus, providing opportunities for students to gain a better understanding of the world is important. In 1989 Donna Stoness developed a class that uses the language experience approach to increase vocabulary and word recognition while expanding the group's knowledge of our environment. The development of two language experience stories increases practise on the words.

In Session 1 the group leader brings in a collection of books and materials on the topic selected by the students. She reads several selections to them. The group discusses new vocabulary and concepts. Often a trip follows this introductory meeting. In Session 2 the students review the information and identify the points they want to include in their experience story. The teacher makes notes and records points that arise in the discussion. Then the group develops their experience story. As each sentence is added the developing story is read by the group and read again by several individuals. The group members read it several more times when the story is completed. In this session or the following one, the group decides what illustrations and pictures they want to include in their book. In Session 3 each student gets a typed copy of their experience story. The group reviews key words and plays word games with these words and others that they have learned before. They also complete a simple reading and writing exercise using the new vocabulary. In Session 4 the group discusses the pictures chosen earlier and develops a sentence or two that corresponds with each one. The leader writes these below the enlarged pictures. Then the group and individuals in the group read it. As a final step, the group identifies the words that they feel require extra work and make a word list. The group reviews these words in game type activities. In Session 5 the students receive the book made from the pictures and story they wrote the previous week. In addition to reviewing the special word list at the end of the book, they have a chance to read the book several times. They also discuss plans for the following weeks.

Donna started the group with three members. As she identified more students who could benefit from these activities, she suggested they join the group. However, Donna asked permission from the group as each new member was added since a strong group bond had developed. This group is now beginning its second year with nine members. Topics discussed to date include dinosaurs, earthquakes, the blue box program and the newspaper.

Although both the Country Group and the Tuesday Troop uses a simple format so the students know what to expect, they provide enough fun and variety to maintain a high level of interest. Both these classes also provide the students with opportunities to participate in the selection of the topics or material. They also enjoy celebrating several special days. Individuals in the group help one another when difficulties arise. Students take pride in demonstrating their reading skills. "Before I used to get stuck with every single word ....reading was hard....now that I know some of the words it is much easier".

Activities For All Students

1. Discussion Groups

Over the past six years discussion groups have provided our students with an opportunity to develop a better understanding of many contemporary issues. These groups have explored and developed different topics over a 6 to 12 week period. Topics chosen with input from the students included capital punishment, free trade, literacy and politics, and the law. All these group discussions incorporated videos, films and guest speakers. Students gathered information from primary sources. Students were presented with different perspectives and had the opportunity to express their viewpoint and to question attitudes and opinions. The highlights of discussions and arguments prepared by the students on capital punishment and free trade were student debates moderated by high profile members of the community. The issues raised in the debate on capital punishment were illustrated in the publication *Lets Hear It* dedicated to the issue.

Last year for the first time, a discussion group was lead by a volunteer, a law student in her final year. Topics included in these sessions were poverty, landlord and tenant problems, and the court. It led one of the participants to write a letter to the editor of our local paper on disability pensions. Recognizing the value of these discussion groups, we hope to make them an integral part of our program.

2. The Drama Group

The idea of creating a play came from a discussion group member and immediately generated a lot of interest and ideas. The students decided to do a series of skits representing everyday situations that someone with reading difficulty has trouble facing. Before acting out their skits, the students participate in a series of warm-up exercises to develop memory, trust and concentration. Other exercises stress group dynamics, body awareness and greater self-confidence. Some of these activities begin each drama session. Volunteers from the University who are taking their teacher's training in drama lead the group through these activities at different times. In developing the play, students generate ideas which they record on charts, discuss and then act out. The skits are constantly revised as the groups add new ideas and delete others. To date, three skits have been developed. One shows the problems faced by a parent who cannot read to her child. The second illustrates the difficulty travelling by plane when you cannot read the signs. The third one shows how difficult it is getting a job when you cannot read or write very well. Students enjoy the opportunity to put on their plays for other students, for literacy groups at conferences, and for outreach in the community.

3. Reading Evenings

Reading Evenings are a wonderful outlet for supporting student writing in our program. After learning about Reading Evenings held in the United Kingdom, we adapted the concept for our program. For three years, the Reading Evenings have provided the focus for our publication of student writing.

> "I enjoy what you are doing for the literacy programs to help them out. I really don't know what else to say because I am a student.
>
> ...
>
> ... especially liked the learners writings being used as "readings" and produced into books, reading evenings, family literacy activities, student support groups.
>
> ...
>
> How can we get funding in B.C. for these kinds of programs?
>
> ...
>
> Listening to students is very important."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

> It doesn't look like the literacy centre tonight. Gone are the familiar partitions which divide the area into one-to-one tutoring cubicles. The candled tables are covered by checkered cloths. The room has added warmth. People are coming in helping themselves to coffee. Conversations start. There is a nervous expectancy in the air. Tonight people have gathered to share their stories...

Usually about 20 students read, with a few limericks by staff, a few stories from tutors and a special presentation by one of our groups. The two hour evening is broken by a refreshment break. The last reading evening was held in a church hall and included a dinner.

The most touching aspect of the event is the very supportive atmosphere for the readers. Even our beginning readers beam when their stories receive enthusiastic applause from the audience. During the months preceding the event, we encourage tutors to help their students prepare a story. There is no pressure put on the students to read, but we have found that when someone attends one reading evening they usually want to read at the next one.

4. Students for Students

The Students For Students group provides a valuable social outlet for many of our students. There are 10 to 15 students who participate on a regular basis. This group provides a forum for student interests and concerns about the program. It also provides the opportunity for students to gain organizational experience. The group organizes social events for students such as trips and dances, and raises funds to support these activities. They also keep a list of students who would like to receive cards on their birthday. They print cards on the computer and send them to the students. Students For Students select a voting and a non-voting member to be on the Board of Kingston Literacy.

Summary

Our experiences with group activities have been very positive. However, when students come at different times, night and day, it is sometimes difficult to get a group started. We have found that we can start with a group as small as two or three and gradually add new members. We believe there is a need to provide more opportunities for students to share experiences and to interact socially. In addition to developing thinking and communication skills these groups also provide important social support. Many of our students are on disability pensions and often lack social support from other sources. As a result, they seek this support from their literacy program where they feel they belong. By meeting this need, literacy groups can play an important role in promoting a healthy community.

The Future

The theme that has reoccurred at this conference is the importance of involving students in the development and management of our programs. In addition, community based programs must include opportunities for volunteers to participate in new ways in new initiatives. Over the next three years, Kingston Literacy will work with both these groups to investigate ways to increase involvement of volunteers and students as volunteers in all aspects of our program.

Partnership will remain the key expectation of government during the 90s. As resources for social services are squeezed over the next decade, agencies will be required to prove that there is broad community support for their services. Greater emphasis on prevention will lead to increased support for family literacy initiatives and programs for disadvantaged youth. Services for disadvantaged adults may be neglected in this change of emphasis.

Thus three challenges face us. Community literacy groups will have to decide what their role is in tackling social issues such as poverty. We will need to look outward to the community and develop new programs cooperatively with other agencies. Perhaps the greatest challenge will be to assess in a realistic manner where we can make the greatest contribution to our communities.

> "How are discussion groups organized? What is the ratio of paid staff to volunteers?
>
> ...
>
> Were the beginning literacy classes for people with mental handicaps? Was it a mixed class? Obviously, if it was, it worked. My experience with this was that the higher functioning adults did not want to be classified in the same class as the lower functioning."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

THE MAIN FOCUS OF THIS WORKSHOP was the selection and training of volunteers for literacy work. The Hackney Learning Centre is in an area of London characterized by poverty, high population density, and many different ethnic groups. Volunteers come from the community, and understand the community context.

A full time volunteer coordinator interviews interested individuals, assessing the person's appropriateness for literacy work. The coordinator explores the person's attitudes. Are they condescending towards people with limited literacy skills? Do they think they are going to "save" someone? Are they interested in the learning process? Do they just want to help out but are not really interested in education?

The Hackney Tutor Training Program gives volunteers several choices. A volunteer can be involved minimally or take advantage of several training opportunities to work toward taking over a class and potentially a job as a paid tutor. Williams stressed the principle of equal opportunity. Volunteers who were in the program were not necessarily favoured over other more qualified people who might be applying for a teaching position.

The volunteer is provided with skill oriented training.It is reasonable for them to aim at paid teaching as an end result of the tutor training. Throughout the year more training sessions are offered from the local adult education authority in addition to the Hackney program, thus enabling them to slowly build up their knowledge and credentials on a part time basis.

At Hackney one-to-one tutoring is seen as the most difficult setting in which to tutor. Only paid tutors teach in one-to-one situations. This challenges the common notion of "each one teach one" that is integral to many of the programs here. A volunteer begins by meeting his or her tutor and works with him or her in a classroom situation. In this way the volunteer learns from an experienced teacher and observes the group dynamic and how to work with sub groups. Certainly it is often a huge step to get a tutor to go from a one-to-one setting to a group.

... from the Facilitator's Report

HACKNEY LEARNING CENTRE: LONDON, ENGLAND

WHAT PLACE SHOULD VOLUNTEER TUTORS HAVE IN ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMS? EXAMINE ALL ASPECTS OF THIS CENTRE, ESPECIALLY THE HACKNEY PHILOSOPHY REGARDING VOLUNTEERS AND THE PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS THIS HAS FOR THE SELECTION AND TRAINING OF TUTORS.

Althea Williams

A Volunteer's Trip Through the System

Volunteers in Adult Basic Education classes in Hackney: the philosophy and practical implications for the selection and training of volunteer tutors.

An enquiry about becoming an Adult Literacy volunteer may either come through the Access and Return to Learning Department or direct to the Volunteer Coordinator. Such enquiries are sometimes a direct response from advertisements but more usually are from word of mouth.

An informal interview is set up between the Coordinator and applicant at one of our centres. As most applicants are not aware of the published materials used in the teaching of adults in basic education, the interview is best arranged in the department resources room. The interview lasts about three-quarters of an hour. The questions are standardised so as to give each person the same chance. They are set out to enable the Coordinator to assess whether the applicant is aware of the issues and has some understanding of adults as learners. Our aim is to professionalize our use of volunteers. This interview is recorded for later feedback if needed and as an aid to assessment. If the applicant demonstrates an interest in other areas of adult education they are directed elsewhere in the Institute, to the English as a Second Language or the Special Needs Departments.

At the interview we give information on the Adult Education Institute and the Department, a brief description of a literacy/ numeracy group and the range of student ability one may find, and information on the volunteer training scheme and other in-service training. Each volunteer is given a pack with a book list, volunteer progression route, a contact name and number, and a diagram of *A volunteer's trip through the training system.*

This interview is a most important process as it enables the Coordinator to select and recruit only those who show a genuine interest in adults as learners, are sympathetic to learners' needs, and patiently respect students as equals.

If these requirements are met the volunteer is offered a place in one of our literacy/numeracy groups in the borough. A volunteer contract is then given and explained to the volunteer, outlining the expectations (one year's commitment of two hours per week in the group, attending in-service training, setting aside time before and after the sessions to discuss and plan work with the tutor). Tutors are paid and are equivalent to 'instructors' by North American jargon. A contract is also sent to the tutor outlining her/his responsibility as a tutor working with, training and supporting a volunteer. Both tutor and volunteer would receive a diagram showing volunteer progression within the group, from the minimum (very restricted work at the tutor' s request) to co-teaching and eventually teaching a whole two hour session. Through this route some volunteers may go on to approval as a paid literacy tutor.

If there is not an available group, the volunteer is placed on a volunteer waiting list which is reviewed as soon as a group needs a volunteer. It is important that the placement is within walking distance if possible or easy access to public transport. A great deal of thought and consideration goes into the placing of a volunteer with the right tutor. This makes for a good working relationship and volunteer progression. We try to achieve a balance of race and gender. Volunteers are generally given places in a literacy/numeracy group, but if a volunteer has former training or experience we may offer work as a one to one volunteer with a student in the student' s own home.

There are several reasons for the use of volunteers in literacy groups in Hackney. We do not want to have a hierarchy of tutor and student where the tutor is the one who knows everything. If we can draw in people from the community who are not teachers but who have a range of skills to offer, the student group can see this and the volunteer may be a role model. Some of our volunteers may at one time have been students in our classes. The group does not focus only on the tutor as the source of knowledge but instead everyone (students, volunteers and tutor) is contributing and learning from each other. On a practical basis, it is quite difficult to give each student the needed time and attention in such large groups.

Some volunteers have jobs and so see this as a way of contributing to the community. Others may find

> "This was wonderful, wonderful! Worth the entire conference! This is a very inspiring model. The use of volunteers working closely with more experienced tutors in small group settings was interesting.
>
> ...
>
> It was exciting to see how volunteers have a clear progression toward paid work as tutors in the future. Orderly tutor selection, training and involvement is a method which is respectful and encouraging of the tutors' sense of commitment.
>
> ...
>
> Equal opportunity. New learners are not new thinkers. Thank you! I would love to see something like this take off in Canada."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

this is a way into teaching without previous academic qualifications. Still others use volunteering as a taster enabling them to choose a career. Literacy is one of the few areas where this is possible. Volunteers open up a wider range for the intake of tutors so people from within the community may be drawn in. In an area like Hackney with such high unemployment it opens up some possibility for employment not only in teaching but as the basis for other work.

The training course for volunteers is a way of professionalising their work as we continue to point out that teaching an adult to read and write requires professional skills; it does not just happen. The training of volunteers is an absolute necessity and has a high priority in our Department. It is essential that volunteers receive the best training from the start. When placed in a group, the volunteer begins to be trained by the tutor of the class. The tutor will support the volunteer and direct the work s/he does with an individual student, a small group who are using word games, etc. Learning and teaching is a two way process and, given the wealth of experience each student brings to the classroom, we encourage volunteers to learn from students by discussing with them the work they have been doing. As the volunteers gain experience they are given more responsibility and may contribute resource material, prepare part of the session, and eventually teach a whole two hour session.

Such practical experience is essential as it equips the volunteer with knowledge and personal insight with which to approach the theoretical aspects of the Volunteer Training Course. It provides a context in which to study the theory of adult learning. The Volunteer Training Course is a four week course of two hours per week. All new volunteers are contracted to attend.

Session One

The volunteer group members examine their own past learning experiences, positive and negative. What does respect for adult learners mean in practical terms? How can the diversity of language and culture in the inner city classroom be an advantage and a resource. Group dynamics and resources are discussed.

Session Two

What is reading? Hearing a student read, how to support and encourage students in their reading, the language experience approach, how to start teaching an absolute beginner.

Session Three

Developing writing and comprehension, Equal Opportunities as an underpinning to all our work and particularly in the preparation of worksheets, evaluation of student progress, the teaching of spelling including analysis of errors and strategies for effective learning.

Session Four

Working with students with learning difficulties. Practical approaches to the integration of students into a group.

Volunteer trainees are expected to read: *Each One Strengthens Each One* by ALBSU, *Working with Words* by Jane Mace, *Pedagogy of the Opressed* by Paulo Freire, *Caribbean Language and Literacy* by Roxy Harris, *Language and Power* by ILEA, and *Versions* by the Central Manchester Caribbean English Programme.

At the end of the training we hope the volunteer will be able to use the practical skills gained in the classroom and the theoretical insight gained in the course to meet the needs of the students in their group.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank all the tutors in the Access and Return to Learning Department of Hackney AEI, Hackney AEI for granting me leave to attend the Literacy 2000 conference, Chris Taylor for her encouragement and support and Jo Temple whose diagram and outline were used in the workshop.

> "Many found the idea that volunteers are primarily used in the classroom rather than in one to one situations interesting. Volunteers are used in supporting roles rather than having full responsibility. The idea is that one-to-one tutoring is often the most challenging of teaching situations and therefore requires more specialized training.
>
> ...
>
> How do we actually create an equal relationship between volunteers and learners?"
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

THE WORKSHOP WAS A PRACTICAL DESCRIPTION of the Literacy program at the Regina Public Library and its cooperative relationship with other community groups and educational institutions. The audience was most interested in the nuts and bolts aspects of the program – operation, evaluation, fit with other programs, and stability of funding. People were impressed with the commitment, enthusiasm and resourcefulness of the RPL.

As libraries have always been thought of as the poor man's university (come in and improve yourself), it follows naturally that opportunities to improve one's literacy skills be made available there. Libraries have always been advocates of lifelong learning. The Regina Public Library has, therefore, included education in its mandate and mission statement. Libraries are accessible to all ages, charge no registration fees, and are open seven days a week, day and night, all year round. As well as being eminently accessible, libraries need readers to exist; therefore, it is in the library's self-interest to provide programs like this.

It makes sense economically to run literacy programs in libraries because with a volunteer base, the only new costs are administrative. Furthermore, salaries in librarianship are less than those in the field of education.

Clearly the Regina Public Library has been a leader in literacy initiatives in Saskatchewan. Thirty percent of all literacy work in Saskatchewan is done at the RPL and its branches. The program includes Fundamental ABE, ESL and Aboriginal components. Because the Board has made this project an integral part of the library's mandate, if grants and special funding dry up, regular funding would be able to absorb the program. It would undoubtedly be smaller, but the program would remain whole.

... from the Facilitator's Report

REGINA LIBRARY'S LITERACY TUTORS: SASKATCHEWAN

Lorraine Hladik

CAN PUBLIC LIBRARIES SPEAR-HEAD COMMUNITY LITERACY INITIATIVES? DO JOINT VENTURES BETWEEN LITERACY PRACTITIONERS AND LIBRARIANS WORK? EXAMINE HOW REGINA PUBLIC LIBRARY'S 1973 INVOLVEMENT IN LITERACY TRAINING HAS LED TO A PROGRAM WHERE 350 TUTOR/STUDENT PAIRS MEET REGULARLY, MAKING THIS LIBRARY A MODEL FOR TUTOR TRAINING PROGRAMS IN NORTH AMERICA.

In 1973, the Regina Public Library recognized the need for adult literacy instruction and developed the Learning Centre as a unit in the Adult Services Department.

At the beginning, small classes were taught by a teacher using the traditional teaching model. This did not prove to be entirely satisfactory and other models were examined. The model used by the Literacy Volunteers of America seemed to be the best for our learners and in 1977 we became affiliated with the LVA program.

We continue to use the LVA model, supplemented by Access Alberta's *Journeyworker Series,* as it has proven to be successful with our learners and our tutors. It is learner-directed and volunteer-based, offering a one-to-one tutoring experience.

Funding and Staffing

Since 1973 the literacy program has received full Board support and is included as a budgetary item. Over 85% of the Library's budget comes from municipal taxes and the Regina City Council is a strong supporter of the literacy program.

In 1987, a directive from the Board made adult literacy a priority and the two Learning Centre staff were supplemented by the equivalent of three full time staff members. These staff members were from branches, programs, and information services and worked part time on literacy initiatives. At the same time, the Learning Centre collection became adult-based with materials that would appeal to adults wishing to upgrade their reading, writing and numeracy skills.

In 1987 the importance of literacy was recognized by governments and in January 1988 funding became available from both the provincial and federal governments through the Saskatchewan Literacy Council. The Library submitted a proposal and received extra funds which have enhanced our core program. The grant money has been used to expand the "core" one-to-one tutoring program, to increase tutor and learner support, and to increase publicity to draw tutors and learners. The library has also been able to get funding from sources other than the Literacy Council, i.e. Youth Literacy Coordinator funded by Employment and Immigration Canada.

Our program increased steadily from 1977 to 1986, and with the added publicity and higher profile within and outside the library, we have dramatically increased participation. From September 1, 1977 to December 31, 1989, 941 tutors were trained, 298 in 1989. The total number of learners enrolled in the same period was 1219 to 1989, 410 in 1989.

Today, the Learning Centre at Central and seven of our eight branches offer literacy tutor training and literacy collections. Permanent staff working in literacy have been supplemented by the equivalent of 4 1/2 grant positions.

Spearheading Literacy Initiatives

Because of the esteem it has within the community, Regina Public Library has been at the forefront of adult literacy in Saskatchewan. The Regina Public Library has a very successful literacy program.

Public libraries were first established as places where people could go to continue their learning experiences. Public libraries are often referred to as *open universities* since they carry a variety of materials to fill the informational and educational needs of the public.

The Regina Public Library has taken the desire for self-directed study one step further by providing opportunities for those with low literacy skills to improve those skills. Learners are able to direct their own tutor-based study to meet their individual goals whether it is reading a story to their children, passing a vocational test, experimenting with recipes or increasing self- esteem and pleasure through reading and writing.

Part of the library's appeal to people needing to upgrade their reading, writing and numeracy skills is its accessibility. The Regina Public Library is open seven days a week, from 9:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. Branches are located throughout the city serving those unable to get to the Central Branch.

The library is a year round institution that is not dictated by a school year or semesters, as often is the case in the educational field. The library can and does offer programs including literacy every month of the year. We do have seasons (fall, winter, spring and summer), but these are less defined than in the educational system. Therefore, if someone wishes to upgrade their literacy skills in June or July they do not need to wait until September to discuss their needs and get help from our literacy program.

The library provides a complete range of materials for the whole family, from the baby (toys and board books) to grandparents (large print and talking books). It also has programs which foster reading and their enjoyment of reading, from storytimes to author readings. A film theatre and an art gallery give people the chance to broaden their experiences in a familiar setting.

The library is a non-political institution that serves all income groups, although traditionally there has been higher use by the middle income group. The literacy program is changing that as the lower income group comes to the library to learn new skills and improve existing ones.

The library is viewed as a safe place for all with no stigma attached to a visit. After all, anyone may want to read a newspaper, borrow a book, magazine, video or record. People can remain in the library as long as they wish and so they get to feel that the library is *their place,* a *home away from home.* Some people need to overcome an aversion to libraries and institutions of any kind and these people feel more comfortable in a branch that is smaller with fewer staff to get to know.

The library is non-judgmental and treats all requests as confidential. The reference staff do not make judgements on the information or books people request, nor do the learning centre staff make judgements on why learners request upgrading. Library staff treat all requests as legitimate and confidential and enable the requesters (learners or whomever) to satisfy their needs.

Learners at the Library

Learners are referred to the library literacy program by other institutions, friends and family, and occasionally through the media.

Potential learners can phone the library and retain their anonymity while getting general information on the literacy programs. They are given an appointment at which an application form is completed. Staff members give detailed information about the program and how it can help that particular individual. Learners are told how long the waiting period will be if there is one. If they wish, they can join small classes to start learning to read and write while they are waiting for a match. They are also encouraged to join the learners' meetings and are put on the mailing list for the learner newsletter.

We do not question why they are asking for help, but rather how we can help them. The learner is accepted as needing upgrading in literacy skills today and the learning centre staff do not make assumptions based on grade level attained or perceived learning disabilities. At no time are the learners made to feel awkward about their lack of literacy skills.

The program is tailored to fit the individual learner and her/his skill level, reinforcing existing skills and building on them. The materials used are those that fit the goals stated by the learner. The goals may need to be restated if they are too unrealistic. Goals need to be realistic challenges and attainable in the near future.

Learning does not occur in a vacuum and literacy upgrading is most effective when linked with practical applications, such as obtaining a driver's license, baking a cake, passing a vocational exam, preparing a resume, or reading and writing reports.

The one-to-one tutor-based, learner-centred program allows the learner to benefit from a personalized learning experience. Such a program increases the motivation for learning as it is geared to self-interests and therefore gains commitment and dedication.

Our one-to-one program is individualized and learner-directed, serving learners at any level. Age, employment, education or ability (physical or mental) are not considered. As there is no charge, all learners have equal access regardless of economic status.

Volunteer Tutors at the Library

Tutors are excited about reading and wish to share this excitement with others. Tutoring allows them to share their love of books, to be associated with a place they regard highly, and to help others in a meaningful way.

Tutoring is a volunteer position that allows for the development of interpersonal skills, allows flexible hours, and allows creativity in learning and communication. In-service workshops, conferences and newsletters promote personal growth and social functions, and provide recognition and feedback which build self-esteem.

Many people want to help others learn but do not have the formal education to be teachers. The literacy program at RPL provides them with the opportunity to develop skills and use them while helping others in a one-to-one situation.

Our program is strong because of its volunteer base, which also allows us to expand as the need grows. Media advertising and speaking to groups have both proven to be effective methods of recruitment.

...

> "... the ever-present question of ongoing funding, and the challenge of promoting the library as approachable for non-readers and non-library users.
>
> ...
>
> I am concerned about the protectionist attitudes from volunteer organizations, community colleges, funding bodies which interfere with delivery of appropriate and successful programs.
>
> ...
>
> ... to help learners think of the library as their place.
>
> ...
>
> On-going funding!"
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

Rationale for a Library-based Literacy Program

While some may consider literacy to be the responsibility of the educational system, the public library is a logical and, indeed, an ideal location for literacy development.

The library is a public place, open to all seven days a week during the day and evening. The programs run by the library are free; the literacy program is no exception, making it accessible, acceptable and attainable by all economic groups.

The library is recognized as a place for the individual and for the family. Potential learners may learn about the literacy programs while taking advantage of one of the many other programs and services offered by the library (for example, non-readers bringing their children to storytime, using the free video service or requesting information).

Libraries are information centres that provide not only materials, but also names of resource people or programs that will meet a person's needs. Users looking for materials on basic reading and writing or GED may be told about the literacy program. The library acts as a clearing house, referring people to our basic literacy program, to the ABE program and GED programs at Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, and to other community-based agencies such as Open Door and Circle Project.

Books, magazines, pamphlets, videos, and many other materials are available for use by tutors or learners in the quest for knowledge. The library offers support groups such as the learners' meetings, tutor in-services, and the *Coffee, Games & Company* social time. Other library programs, including legal and consumer awareness, are available and open to the learners.

Regina Public Library is able to train and support our one-to-one program at a low cost, partially because some of the administration costs are absorbed as part of the general costs of the institution (i.e. heat, light, space) and partially because the program is largely dependent on volunteers. A rough estimate of the cost of literacy is approximately 3% of the total library budget, including administration, public relations and social programs.

Since 1986 when literacy became a higher priority our active tutor/learner pairs have steadily increased. Tutor/learner pairs active at the end of 1989 were 366 compared to 285 at the end of 1988. These numbers show that the library has the ability to reach out and touch the many needy (about 28% of Saskatchewan people according to Stats Canada.) Since 1987 when the Saskatchewan Literacy Council became active, the library literacy program has helped over 1/3 of the total number enroled in the Saskatchewan literacy programs.

Our infrastructure allows the library to expand the service in response to demand and in response to extra funds. This is due to our program being volunteer-based as well as the fact that it was and is an established program in a non-educational institution.

Cooperative Ventures

In the provision of literacy, we cooperate with many institutions both educational and community-based.

One example of cooperation is the Literacy Coordinators Group of which Mary Cavanagh is a participant. Coordinators from all Saskatchewan literacy programs receiving funds from the Saskatchewan Literacy Council meet eight times a year to share ideas, evaluate programs, and plan projects that complement and strengthen literacy provision in the province.

This group discusses projects and funding before requests go to the Saskatchewan Literacy Council. The library does not receive the amount of funding which other groups receive but the support received has allowed us to expand our current programs and initiate new ones such as Native Literacy and Literacy Development (follow-up of tutors and learners) which enhance and support our basic one-to-one program.

Publicity of province-wide programs has been a joint venture through the Council, with a toll-free number referring potential tutors or learners to a program in their area.

The PALS (Principle of Alphabet Literacy System) project, funded by Saskatchewan Education, IBM and Regina Public Library has been a very successful program. A half-lab was placed in the library for two years. The library paid for renovations to house the lab as well as all administration costs; IBM provided the computer hardware and software; and the Department of Education provided furniture and salaries for one and a half positions for two years. There are 13 labs (half or full) throughout the province.

PALS, a computerized learning module, complements our core one-to-one tutoring program by providing another learning experience. PALS learners are referred to the program by Learning Centre staff, by tutors, by graduates and by other institutions. After 100 hours in the program, PALS graduates are matched with a tutor or referred to ABE or other suitable programs. Again, because of our year-round programs, we are able to offer daytime, evening and summer classes and have had more adult learners complete the program than any other PALS lab in the province.

However, there is a concern that this financial support may end in June, 1991. The library cannot operate the PALS program without grant money from the Department of Education.

Regina Public Library has a good working relationship with SIAST – Wascana campus (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology). Students are referred to the ABE program once they have reached the Grade 5 level and would benefit from a classroom setting. Some of our paired students continue to work with a tutor as well as in the classroom setting.

In the fall of 1990, we discontinued GED classes partially because of the overlap with SIAST and partially because it was felt that our learners could benefit more from *Developmental Writing* classes which are not geared to GED recognition but rather to increased writing skills. While SIAST focuses on the more structured GED classes, the library can compliment these classes with unstructured learning experiences such as the writing class.

We have developed cooperation and trust with the aboriginal groups in the city through our Native Literacy Coordinator. The Gabriel Dumont Institute and SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) refer learners and tutors to us, and tutors trained at RPL will work at the two institutions helping other students upgrade their skills.

The Circle Project, a community services agency that takes a holistic approach to dealing with social problems among the aboriginal people, has tutors, usually ex-teachers, working for them. We will conduct tutor workshops for them or include their tutors in our workshops, as well as provide resources to support their literacy program.

The Open Door Society, an agency that provides work preparation courses for immigrants, brings their 'students' for an orientation tour of the entire library and for an introduction to the literacy program. Staff from the Open Door Society have taken the ESL tutor workshops to increase their skills in helping their 'students' learn English. Our basic library brochures are being translated into the major language groups of new immigrants. I sit on their Employer's Advisory Committee. Open Door Society people are regular library users, for themselves and their families; some who were job placements are now employed at the library.

Our Youth Literacy Coordinator has formed links with the Rainbow Youth Centre, a drop-in centre for youth. Youth tutors have been trained to provide literacy training on a drop-in basis at the centre. Regular sessions for these disadvantaged youth did not work out; the flexible drop-in sessions meet their needs better.

The Youth Coordinator works with the John Howard Society, encouraging youth in the fine option program to become tutors. He recruits and matches young people who need literacy upgrading with tutors. Other youth tutors come from the regular school system.

All social agencies including churches are kept aware of our program and refer both tutors and learners. The Abilities Council refers learners and does presentations for tutors to help them work with individuals who have special disabilities which inhibit learning.

The library and Saskatchewan Federation of Labour are cooperating in an initiative to provide literacy upgrading in the workplace. SFL will concentrate on union shops and we will provide assistance to non-unionized workplaces.

We are exploring the possibility of initiating 'peer tutoring by seniors' with the various seniors groups in Regina, in particular the University of Regina Seniors groups. Statistics Canada's past survey shows that 62% of those over 55 do not have skills necessary to function adequately in our society. At present about 7% of our learners and 34% of the tutors are over 50.

Community Services staff participate as presenters and participants at all social agency, aboriginal or educational workshops in order to give and get information on how to eradicate illiteracy in our community.

The library will continue to act both as a resource and as an active participant in the fight for literacy. We will share our knowledge and expertise in providing a volunteer-based, learner-directed one-to-one tutoring program. We will share our materials and provide workshops either for or in partnership with other groups.

> "How will the libraries get on-going funding for capital expenses connected to literacy programs and for at least one paid worker."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

THIS WORKSHOP EXAMINED the problems and potentials of community-based, learner centred programming.

Diversification of the funding base is essential if programs are going to survive. It is important that community programs educate funding agencies about program values. The ideal of "learner centredness" becomes in practice a difficult objective to define and quantify for funding agencies which require accountability in terms of standard, functional outcomes, with an emphasis on improving specified skills.

The work of volunteers is an issue needing scrutiny. Participants expressed the need for an increase in the level of social awareness and critical thinking among volunteers. There are differences in point of view and commitment between workers and volunteers. Each group has its own idea of what learner-centredness means.

Many of the characteristics being discussed as defining effective community-based programs come into conflict with expressed needs of the learners themselves – a "split between community needs and philosophical ideas".

Gaber-Katz described literacy as a "rupture point" in our social structure, where many social and economic problems break through. The importance of a literacy community as a self-help structure was identified to address problems of alienation and "internalized oppression". Life skills development, networking, and formation of helper organizations among learners are the 'mainstay' of community programs.

Prison workers suggested that the experience of beauty available in learning to read and write is effective in giving meaning and purpose to literacy activity in the prisons and are just as important as the functional elements in community literacy programs.

Increasing the input from learners and expanding their decision-making power are important if a literacy group is to form "a community within which members can get support as well as start to empower themselves and their lives".

... from the Facilitator's Report

COMBINING PRACTICE AND THEORY IN COMMUNITY LITERACY

Elaine Gaber-Katz and Gladys Watson

WHAT COMBINATION OF PRACTISE AND THEORY LEADS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY-BASED LITERACY? EXPLORE THIS QUESTION BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF A PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH STUDY THAT EXAMINED THREE METROPOLITAN TORONTO EDUCATION PROGRAMS WHICH TAKE UP THE ISSUE OF LITERACY IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR GOAL FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY SOCIETY.

A community-based literacy project is one in which members of a community share locally the responsibility for providing adult literacy education (Toronto Curriculum Working Group 1984).

Preamble

This workshop presents an overview of a participatory research study on community-based literacy that was conducted during 1987-88 in Metropolitan Toronto. The purpose of the workshop was to provide workshop participants with background information about the study and a summary of the research process. Study findings and analysis of the research were reviewed. This research study, *The Land that We Dream of ... A Participatory Study of Community-Based Literacy*, is forthcoming from OISE Press (1990).

Context for the Research

Throughout Canada, literacy education has generally been provided by educational institutions such as school boards, community colleges, libraries, and local affiliates of national and international volunteer literacy organizations. In greater Metropolitan Toronto this has also been the case, but during the last ten years community-based literacy programs have developed as an alternative. In these programs, which are usually located in community facilities, volunteers provide adult literacy instruction for English-speaking adults on a one-to-one and small group basis. Operating with small budgets, these volunteer programs view the acquisition of reading and writing skills in the context of a larger goal – to encourage all members of the community to participate fully in society. All aspects of the program – organizational structure, setting, program design, methodology, and materials – are shaped by this goal. As programs have grown and developed, literacy practitioners have begun to talk about the need to analyze and document community-based literacy experience.

This study presents case studies of three community-based literacy programs: Toronto Adult Literacy for Action Centre (ALFA), East End Literacy, and Peel Literacy Guild. In 1988, there were approximately 13 operating in the Metropolitan Toronto area.

The idea for this study originated with the Participatory Research Group (PRG). During 1985-86, the PRG literacy advisory committee met to develop a proposal and explore funding possibilities. In 1987, when initial funding was secured from the Ontario government and the Maytree Foundation, the research study was formally launched. A volunteer working group consisting of a representative of PRG and two members from local community-based literacy programs was formed to co-ordinate the project. Subsequently, in the summer of 1987, the authors were chosen by the working group to be the researchers for the project. The working group felt that, given our experience with, and commitment to, community-based literacy, we would be trusted by community-based literacy programs to conduct the research in a sensitive manner.

The Research Process

The project followed participatory research process, involving staff, board members, volunteers, and learners from each of the three designated programs. Two evening research sessions were conducted with each of the programs, and the participants from the three programs were brought together for a weekend retreat. Tapes of the research discussions were transcribed and then analyzed. The findings were circulated to all research participants and their comments were incorporated into the resulting book.

Research Findings

When we considered and analyzed the data from the research discussions, it became apparent that there were three themes underlying the work of these programs: the particular way in which learners were taken into account in the program; the programs' interpretation and understanding of literacy; the sense of commitment to community that was present as part of the literacy work that was being done.

The first theme became apparent when people in the programs talked about starting from the learners' own experiences and the need to value those experiences. They also talked about the need for learning to be relevant to the learner.

> "The curriculum isn't set before the learner walks in the door."

Learners themselves talked about what they expected of a literacy program.

> "It is very important for me to feel equal to the tutors, even

"...clarifying the importance of literacy being learned in a social way provides fuel for my fight against wholly computer-based programming

...

How do we educate funders to the value of community-based education? Programs must stick to their own guidelines in accepting funding – fund the whole program not projects.

...

...tension in the fit between expressed needs of learners and the volunteers, staff and board.

...

There are great differences between the community programs they described and the typical USA Laubach and LVA tutoring. Wish we could import more of your good ideas below the border."

... from Participants' Response Cards

though we are not equal in terms of how much we know."

The second theme emerged when we began to discuss what people meant by the term literacy. These are the kinds of things we heard:

> "It's not just functional literacy ... some things you learn just because they're beautiful."

> "Every text is political and has a point of view. It comes from somewhere. Part of what literacy is, is to teach learners this."

> "To participate is part of literacy learners taking more control over their lives and the forces that touch on their lives.".

When we discussed the relationship between the programs and the communities in which they are located, the third theme surfaced. People told us:

> "We are connected with the community. Our program has direct contact with other community-based services."

> "We're creating our own community in a sense. We're drawing in people from the area."

> "... you come away with the idea that you are located somewhere in society."

These three themes were so integral to community-based literacy practice that we named them as elements – fundamental, irreducible components:

- learner-centredness
- literacy from a critical perspective
- community-building.

The study explores how these elements interact to shape the emerging practice and theory of community-based literacy. Each element is examined in depth in terms of how it defines and limits community-based literacy. The study also addresses some of the tensions and dilemmas that occur in practice such as how small, under-funded programs can maintain a high quality service while continuing to grow and develop; how a program with limited resources balances the competing needs of learners, tutors, volunteers, board members, and staff; and how programs articulate their goals – teaching reading and writing or empowerment. The study also highlights the tremendous accomplishments of community-based literacy such as the production of working-class writings and the potential of community-based literacy to redress issues of social injustices and inequality. As stated in the study, "Some literacy learners may be confined by poverty into limited boundaries of thought and action. Part of the task of community-based literacy is to widen these boundaries and to assist literacy learners in articulating their aspirations for themselves and for their children, and voicing the demands that will strengthen, rather than limit, their aspirations. Community-based literacy programs strive to build supportive communities, working from the premise that community is essential for humanity." (Gaber-Katz & Watson 1990)

East End Literacy

Initiated by community workers in 1978, East End Literacy is located in an old Victorian house owned by Toronto Public Library. East End Literacy works primarily with English-speaking learners who live in the east end of Toronto. The program has seventy-five student/tutor pairs that meet either in the community or the Reading Centre operated by the program.

Community education, advocacy, and clear writing and design are integral to East End Literacy's programming. The program is perhaps best known for its publishing. East End Literacy Press has produced a number of publications including the *Writer's Voice*, a student-written and student-produced periodical and the *New Start Reading Series*, a series of books produced for adult new readers. East End Literacy is also known for its pioneering work in the area of student leadership and student involvement.

East End Literacy has a board of directors that supports a staff of five literacy workers. Active participation in local, provincial, and national literacy organizations is a priority. While it has chosen to remain a small, local literacy program that provides literacy learners with a community education alternative, it assists other community literacy programs to get started. East End Literacy has conducted several program evaluations and has thoroughly documented its development as a community-based literacy program.

Peel Literacy Guild

The Peel Literacy Guild, which began in 1981, has two tutoring centres, one in the city of Mississauga, and one in the city of Brampton. The region of Peel is not officially part of Metropolitan Toronto, but is considered part of 'greater Metro'. The cities of Mississauga and Brampton cover large geographic areas and have a rapidly growing and changing population.

The Peel Literacy Guild, initiated with funds from a federal grant, developed a funding strategy which enables it to draw funding from a range of sources, including private foundations, fundraising events such as bingos, and government grants. Firmly rooted in its community, the Peel Literacy Guild enjoys the support of many community agencies and institutions, including both the separate and public Boards of Education, the library, and various service clubs and churches.

Working with over one hundred eighty-five learners, the Peel Literacy Guild publishes several student-written publications and prepares for its tutors, some of whom are paid, creative packages which facilitate the teaching of basic skills. Peel Literacy Guild is very active in Literacy networks and has been, and continues to be, a strong supporter of the Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy.

...

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Toronto Curriculum Working Group. 1984. *Community-Based Literacy in an Urban Setting: A Model*. Toronto: unpublished paper.

Gaber-Katz, Elaine and Gladys M. Watson. 1990. *The Land That We Dream Of...A Participatory Study of Community-Based Literacy*. Toronto: OISE Press.

"How to get a multiplicity of groups to dialogue and work together for the advancement of literacy.

...

Developing a critical perspective is part of community based programs.

...

...the idea that a literacy group forms a community within which members can get support as well as start to empower themselves and their lives.

...

It's not just functional literacy. Some things you learn just because they are beautiful.

...

How can we implement the B.C. Provincial Literacy Advisory Committee report to establish money for a comprehensive approach to literacy?

...

Funding strategies for B.C.!!!!

...

...the connection in theory, but more significantly to me, between the personal development which comes through becoming 'literate' (in the broadest sense) and the development of the sense of self which came for me through the women's movement and the therapy I undertook.

...

The whole notion of 'empowerment': What does it mean? Is the term becoming little more than jargon? Literacy may or may not 'empower'. "

... from Participants' Response Cards

THE WORKSHOP offered an historical overview of literacy developments in Quebec, covering political, social, and pedagogical aspects. Simard is known in Quebec for his involvement in the Quebec Coalition of Popular Literacy Groups, established in 1981 and currently comprising some 45 diverse, autonomous groups, each with its own democratic structure, and a general assembly which meets twice annually. Learner involvement extends to the organization of assemblies.Programming approaches range from initiatives deeply rooted in community economic ventures to those more tied to formal political activity.

Current developments in Quebec have had a negative impact on literacy programs. Government has placed pressure on literacy programs to solve specific social problems arising from welfare and unemployment insurance reform, the deinstitutionalization of social services, and an influx of immigrants.

How can the philosophy of Freire be applied and how successful has the attempt been in the Quebec context? The Freirean approach has been suggested by some to be "more suited to facilitators than to participants", and others have commented that "Freire cannot liberate us; we must liberate ourselves". One group has conceptualized the accomplishment of 'conscientization' as occurring in three stages: (1) awareness of oneself, (2) awareness of one's immediate milieu and (3) awareness of the broader environment, corresponding roughly to beginning, intermediate and advanced stages of literacy learning.

Hypotheses offered regarding the inability of programs to reach a significant proportion of the target population included: poor experiences in public school and the failure to adequately fund recruitment. Furthermore, the changing focus of programs from 'pure' literacy to upgrading and vocational training may be responsible for recruitment difficulties.

Discussion centred on learner participation in programs. Specifically, learners had requested a set of coalition documents be 'translated' into more accessible language. The Coalition denied this request because of the time involved.

... from the Facilitator's Report

APPLYING FREIRE, RE-THINKING CONCEPTIONS: QUEBEC

Pierre Simard

DOES THE PEDAGOGY OF PAULO FREIRE OFTEN SUIT EDUCATORS MORE THAN LEARNERS IN AN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRY? DEBATE THE BROADER IMPLICATIONS OF A FREIRE-INSPIRED APPROACH BASED ON THE CONCLUSIONS DRAWN BY LE RÉGROUPEMENT DES GROUPES POPULAIRES D'ALPHABETISATION, A COALITION OF OVER 30 DIVERSE LOCAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITY GROUPS INVOLVED IN LITERACY IN TOWNS, CITY NEIGHBOURHOODS, IN ETHNIC COMMUNITIES, AND WITH SPECIFIC-NEEDS GROUPS.

The theme of this workshop comes from a paragraph in a speech given by Louise Miller (former coordinator of the RGPOQ) in 1987 at Toronto's international seminar *Literacy in Industrialized Countries: A Focus on Practice.* She said "Nevertheless, without denying the value of Paulo Freire's approach over a period of time, the groups realized that it was often more suited to the facilitators than to the participants". Why is that so? This is the question I have been asked to discuss with you.

First we must say that the Régroupement have been influenced by Freire's theory. In 1980 ten groups (community-based organizations) decided to create a coalition in order to be more influential. At that time, the first goal was to get the government to recognize the role of community-based organizations in the development of literacy programs in Quebec. Our approach was directly influenced by Freire. For us, as for Freire, the role of education was to give more power to people in order to make them able to change and improve their lives.

Five years later, 30 groups were part of the coalition. So, it was time for the Régroupement to further define its objectives as the coalition was getting bigger. In 1985 the member organizations spelled out their main objectives:

to ensure the promotion, advocacy and development of popular literacy, of community literacy groups, and of the rights of illiterates.

The Régroupement considers that popular literacy is a multi-faceted approach towards autonomous popular education and is characterized by its educational and political dimensions and its social implication. Let's see in more detail what this implies.

Educational Dimension

Learning to read and write is a tool. Through a collective approach, the individual develops a sense of belonging and capacity to carry out demands. The participant is involved in the learning process and in running the training centre.

Political Dimension

A social and political awareness is developed among participants and facilitators. Collective responsibility toward the social environment is fostered in order to improve living conditions in the community.

Social Dimensions

Through working with community organizations, the community is sensitized to the issues surrounding illiteracy. The rights of the illiterate need to be defended.

With these dimensions, the Regroupement was adapting for its needs what Paulo Freire was insisting on: his refusal to dichotomize action and reflection; his insistence on the non-neutrality of education; his insistence that human consciousness is intentionalizing rather than passive and static (Darcy, Martin P. , *Reappraising Freire: the potential and limits of conscientization*).

The point, however, is not to interpret Freire into the Canadian situation, nor to translate him, nor to use him as a guide. The point is to do for ourselves what he has done for himself and his situation. Freire cannot liberate us; we must liberate ourselves (Darcy).

To illustrate how we adapted Freire's theory or how we 'liberated ourselves', I will present examples of what was done in our groups at the beginning of the 1980s.

1) At *le Carrefour d'education populaire de Pointe St. Charles* the participants were invited to get involved in services and activities such as a second hand clothes store, community holidays, Fetes populaires, a library, handicraft workshops, bazaars, and nutrition workshops. These activities and services were designed to provide an opportunity for the participants to empower themselves through more control over what was going on. Most of the services are still functioning.

2) At *la boite a lettres de Longueuil*, a centre with a 'young' clientele, they decided in 1984 to make a video with and for the young people participating at *la boite a lettres*. This activity was designed as 'a process video' since the process of making the video with the participants was as important as the result itself.

3) At *lettre en Main* in Rosemont, the group decided in 1986 to hold a real election within the group. The participants had to follow the same process as a real election. Coincidentally there was a provincial election being held at the same time.

4) Finally, in 1984 at le Régroupement itself we organized what we called *la grande Rencontre* which took 400 participants from all over the province for a week-end at l'Université Laval. There were

> " How are our programs really benefiting our participants? Many people want to get their GED because they believe that all these doors will open for them. But do they?
>
> ...
>
> It was good to hear about a literacy program that has a political perspective that is not functioning totally successfully. This made me feel that I was not the only one whose literacy program doesn't meet the ideal. This workshop was a breath of fresh air in that it dealt with the problems of funding, ESL, first language speakers and commented on the difficulties of having learners or participants participate. Simard indicated how exhausting the work is. "
>
> **... from Participants' Response Cards**

> “Pierre left me with this question: Were the groups really practising the principles of Freirian education given that:
>
> 1. the teachers wrote the political forum materials in a language structure and vocabulary which was inaccessible to the participants and that they resented the idea of the work involved in translating into the student's language.
>
> 2. the group expects their constituents – the poor and unemployed – to come to them for conferences and education. Compare this to the Hackney learning model where the tutors go into the community to do activities with the people from which learners can then initiate literacy learning requests.”
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

over thirty five different workshops facilitated almost entirely by participants. The organizing committee was formed by seven participants and three workers.

These examples give an idea of what we are doing in our groups to try to empower the participants and giving them more 'grip' in their lives. Our long range objective is that the participants would be part of the decision making structure of their own community-based organization.

In accordance with the three dimensions (educational, political and social) of popular literacy as described above, the place of the participants is in the centre of all the activities organized in our group. However, the type of work we are doing in our groups is closely linked with the type of clientele we get. And maybe we will understand better what Louise Miller was suggesting when she was saying that "Freire's approach was often more suited to the facilitators that to the participants".

The Development of Literacy Programs in Quebec Since 1989

We have seen that our approach is to give to illiterate people the means they need to get more power in their day-to-day lives in order to improve their lives. This is not easy to do. Literacy problems are not isolated from the context in which people live. Our analysis of the causes of illiteracy leads us to the conclusion that poverty and illiteracy are closely linked.

At the beginning of the 1980s the popular groups were a l'avant garde and were the first to put pressure on government and society to make them recognize the importance of the illiteracy problem. The question of recruitment was (and still is) there. But the people who decided to get involved in a literacy process were involved on a volunteer basis. They were not forced to do so. At that time, literacy programs were not as structured as they are now and we had plenty of opportunities to create the kind of literacy that we thought was most adapted to the needs.

The concept of *popular literacy* was first developed by literacy groups but very soon the school board developed a kind of adaptation of this concept. They called it *community literacy*. Briefly, the objectives of both are the same. The programs are based on the everyday life skills. From this point, the people who wanted to get involved in a literacy process had the choice: a *popular group* or the school board.

Of course, most of the participants never see their involvement in a literacy process as a political gesture. Their first objective is: I want to know how to read and write. It is the way that we in popular groups lead the participants in their process that makes it political. Even though we always felt a gap existed between our expectations and the participants' expectations (for example, some participants always thought that a discussion on any topic is a waste of time), we can say that because people were there on a volunteer basis, the *consciousness process* was always possible.

In 1986 the government decided to give more money to literacy. However, more of the money goes to the school boards because they are considered the principal administration responsible for education in Quebec. Illiterate people get money to go to school as long as they go at the 'official school'. Nevertheless, some popular groups with special agreements benefit from the same treatment. Of course, since the government provides the funding, their programs are more controlled in terms of *results.* After ten years of literacy in Quebec, the tendency is to focus on *qualification scolaire* and *rattrapage scolaire.* The ground-work is left to the popular groups but with no financial resources. From the government point of view literacy is an *education issue* and the answer is to give all the resources to the school system.

Because most illiterate people have been through the school system before and have bad memories of that experience, we believe at le Régroupement that literacy should be an issue for all the social actors, from the union, to the *boss* and every ministry or department involved in social issues.

Giving a 'school answer' to a problem as broad as illiteracy (which can, in part, be attributed to the failure of the school system) is a demonstration of narrow mindedness on the part of the government. Furthermore, since the reform of the unemployment and welfare programs in Quebec, people who are declared 'able to work' but who have 'no qualifications' are forced to go back to school. With the cuts in social and health programs, there are many mentally handicapped people left with no professional help.

This adds to the problem in that many institutions are referring this clientele to literacy programs. The result is that we now face a new clientele of people who are not necessarily *willing* to get involved in a literacy process.

Conclusion

It has always been difficult to apply Freire's theory in our popular approach but it has always been possible. After a while the participants get used to our *informal* approach and to being asked to get involved in a number of activities which actualize their potential.

But this is a broad approach. We do not have in mind making people more adapted to employment needs. We have never had a time limit in our program. Our goal is to have the participants experience a democratic way of learning that can be useful in their everyday lives. Literacy is only a means not a final goal.

Now the government has decided that 2000 hours will be the time limit permitted to someone who gets involved in a literacy process. The question is, after this, where does one go ... to the high school?

As the gap gets bigger between the illiterate people and the literate people, society is using the school degree as a criteria to put aside people who don't know how to read and write. One has to have a high school degree to get a job as a janitor. It is quite a dead end!

We, at le Régroupement, think that with the kind of technological society we have, we will always see a portion of the population who won't ever have the possibility to follow the main stream. To be able to get involved in a literacy process one has to be motivated. And this motivation will never be there if you are told that you have to go to school for the next ten years only to be able to get a job as a janitor.

At le Régroupement we are at the point where we tell the policy makers, "Let's be realistic. Instead of trying to get the people to you, try to get to the people."

Lalita Raudas of the Society for Alternatives in Education, New Delhi, asked "Can literacy help us live a little better?" in Toronto in 1987 at the seminar *Literacy in Industrialized Countries.* If not we will say "For god's sake, leave us alone."

“Groundwork is needed to stir up awareness that literacy is a human right and makes a difference to a person's sense of self-worth and confidence in relating to others.

...

How do we resist the trend towards vocational, institutional education rather than politically-based education.

...

The methodology of literacy practise may perpetuate the *blame the victim* approach in education and social policy ie. literacy is a personal responsibility or psychological problem of the learner.

...

We must examine state education for its middle class bias and exclusion of poor kids' experience in curriculum.”

... from Participants' Response Cards

IN THIS WORKSHOP SOME DISCUSSION took place about the fact that the East End literacy program that Sally was describing, Family Issues Group, was billed as a discussion group, not as a literacy class. The point was raised that it was dishonest to do so. Sally responded that East End Literacy (EEL) does "content-based literacy" that responds to the needs that participants find in their lives. She also said that for most of their learners admitting illiteracy was dangerous; it was another mark against them in a situation where the Children's Aid Society was questioning their ability to be good parents.

Someone asked about the preparation that was done to get a guest speaker ready to deal with literacy learners. Sally talked about the preparation that learners make, that is, developing a list of questions for which they need answers. The facilitator talks to the guest speaker about what she could expect; a lot of thought and searching goes into finding guest speakers who would be appropriate for the class.

Several people said in their written responses that learner-driven programs are soft; that is, they have no set agenda. Sally made the point that for the facilitators or instructors of such groups not having an agenda was immensely freeing and allowed for better teaching and learning than when the programmers decided in advance what the agenda would be.

A great deal of interest was expressed about plain language and about educating agencies and schools so that written material is easier to cope with for everyone.

... from the Facilitator's Report

PROMOTING LEARNER-DRIVEN PROGRAMS

Sally McBeth

DOES THE DEGREE OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION QUALITATIVELY ALTER THE WAY LITERACY IS UNDERSTOOD AND TALKED ABOUT? DOES LEARNER PARTICIPATION CHANGE HOW PROGRAMS ARE DEVELOPED, TUTORS ARE TRAINED, AND LEARNERS ARE EVALUATED? FOLLOW THE EVOLUTION OF EAST END LITERACY'S "LITERACY AND THE PARENT" PROJECT IN TORONTO, WHERE LEARNERS' INVOLVEMENT IN STARTING A NEW PROGRAM HAS LED TO DEEP CHANGES IN THE ORGANIZATION.

East End Literacy is a community-based learning centre for adults located in a densely populated, low-income area of downtown Toronto. The organization has a diversity of funders, both public and private, and this enables it to set its policies and plan its programs with considerable independence. There are at any one time about 85 active learners in the program, an equal number of trained volunteers, and a staff of six. In addition to one-to-one tutoring and several small groups, we have a vibrant publishing program dedicated to student writing and we do extensive public education and advocacy.

East End is more than ten years old now and has evolved fairly stable structures for decision-making and accountability. The board of directors is composed of community residents, most of whom are former tutors; about one quarter are students. There are five very hard-working committees of the board: Program and Evaluation, Funding and Advocacy, Personnel, Press, and Building. Students sit on the committees; they also have a student support group.

East End Literacy is generally admired in adult education circles for its independence, for its organizational democracy, for its learner-centred teaching approach, for the success and dynamism of its projects. However, It's a damned uncomfortable place to work. Somebody is always challenging the way things get done. Somebody is always thinking up something new. Nothing is ever routine. We are not satisfied with the level of democracy in our organization. We are not satisfied that we have truly learner-centred programs. We work in the midst of, and are exhausted by, the relentless poverty of our neighbourhood and all its attendant woes.

And so the program planning process I am about to describe is not, in my mind, a series of steps or even an organized system of thought. It is a description of a few episodes in an organization's never-ending struggle for its own integrity.

The program in question is a *Family Literacy* program we started to plan in 1988 and finally launched in 1990. There were several influences which led us to believe we should go in this direction:

1. The Right to Learn Report

This report, passed by the Toronto Board of Education in 1986, supported adult literacy programs. One important part of the rationale for this report was that "research and experience have shown that one of the most effective ways of improving the educational experiences of the students in our schools is the provision of educational opportunities for their parents."

2. Parenting Group

In the spring of 1986, volunteer Jan Kutcher organized a learning group for parents and babysitters. They discussed, read and wrote about issues such as eating, bedtime, sickness, having fun with kids, behaviour problems, and school. This group ran for 8 weeks and was well-attended.

3. Childcare for EEL Learners

In 1987, when learners requested childcare while attending groups and tutoring sessions, EEL responded by providing childcare with funding from the Secretary of State and George Brown College. The EEL Board of Directors, as part of their Long Range Planning process, made childcare a priority and began looking for a funding source for childcare as part of their core budget. One possibility was the Ministry of Community and Social Services. There was some interest from a local daycare in providing one subsidized space for EEL learners to share.

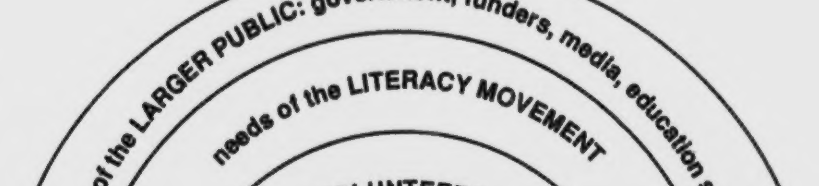
4. Understanding the School System

It was found that adult learners at EEL often did not understand what was happening to their children in the schools. For example, one mother brought in an extremely long, complicated report from her child's kindergarten teacher which she could not read. Many other parents did not understand why their children were being put in special education classes or were being streamed; parents would go to meetings with teachers unprepared and intimidated and leave not knowing how their child was doing; parents had trouble understanding notes coming home from school; parents were unable to help their children with homework. A literacy program in Washington, D.C. recognized these problems and built assistance to parents in the schools into their core services.

5. Advocacy with the School System

In 1987 EEL staff began to document requests for help from parents on behalf of their illiterate children. We found out about reading clinics and private tutoring agencies in Toronto, however, the fees were well beyond what parents in our neighbourhood could pay. Alternatively, we successfully referred two people to the OISE Psychoeducational Clinic, staffed by graduate students; the fee was on a sliding scale. We urged parents to bring the matter to the attention of their school trustee since the Board of Education was supposed to be providing literacy in its special education programs.

When we try to plan things at East End we have a picture that we sometimes draw on a flip chart to help us understand how we see ourselves in the world. It looks like this:


needs of the LARGER PUBLIC: government, funders, media, education system
needs of the LITERACY MOVEMENT
needs of EEL VOLUNTEERS & community
needs of STUDENTS (current & potential)

> "Schools and social agencies must recognize the need for clear or plain language to be used in communicating with parents.
>
> ...
>
> The group was intrigued by the idea of starting with no plan; letting the plan develop as a result of listening carefully to participants in what is billed as a discussion group. Is the program "mushy" if there is no plan or agenda; that is, is the program completely learner driven? Many said they would take this idea home to try."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

The idea is to look at what needs or concerns the students are raising and to keep those needs and concerns in our heads while we assess all the needs, concerns and pressures coming from the local community and the larger world. This helps us to keep from running away with a program idea that is merely the result of pressure from the larger educational community, for example, or the result of money being available to do a certain thing. What we are looking for is a point of convergence among the expressed needs and interests of our students and our community and the opportunities and interests of the larger world.

Back in 1988 it was clear to the Program Committee and to the Board that our students wanted some kind of *Family Literacy* program but we didn't know what it should look like. Quite a few literacy organizations were piloting family literacy projects at the time, and it was easy to get carried away with the ideas everyone else was having. I remember how excited I was by the Literacy Council of Alaska's Parent and Tot Reading Program. One day I was having lunch with a student named Debbie Sims and I showed her their brochure.

Debbie Sims started in our program six years ago as a virtual non-reader and has done very well. Polio and its treatment made literacy unattainable for her as a child. She is now raising two girls, one of them, Deanna, still a pre-schooler about the same age as my son, Lars. I've always has a lot of respect for Debbie and her ideas.

We looked at the brochure. It says *Don't Let Your Child Miss These Special Moments.* There was a drawing of a beautiful young mother in a frilly dress snuggling up with a story book and her curly haired toddler.

"Don't you think East End should do something like this?" I said. "Lars and I read together every night and it really is a special time for us. We're close, all my attention is on him and he's learning."

Debbie looked doubtful. "I never did read with my oldest but I do try with Deanna," she said. "It's never comfortable, though. She's starting to correct me now."

Then she thought for a minute. "I agree that it's important to make a special time for each child. For me, my special time with Deanna is when I'm teaching her needlework. We're close together, all my attention is on her and she's learning from me."

This incident with Debbie is my favourite example of how honouring adult learners in the program planning process tends to turn you on your head. Debbie was right. The Alaska program is probably wonderful there, but it would have been a disastrous starting point for East End Literacy. So many urban parents are under the scrutiny of social agencies and live in fear of having their children taken away. It would be mistaken and foolish to design a program that appealed to their feelings of inadequacy and fear. They simply would not attend.

Talking to parents like Debbie has forced me to think hard about who gets to define what *Family Literacy* actually is. The Coors Foundation for Family Literacy has defined this issue in a way that many of us in the literacy movement find dangerous. That foundation ran a public awareness advertise-ment in several glossy magazines last summer which said: "Illiteracy is spreading like the worst kind of disease ... And since women are still the primary caretakers of children, the cycle continues to be passed down from generation to generation." The message was illustrated with a graphic of a woman holding a child while another clung to her scrawny waist. All three faced outwards – but instead of faces, their heads were shown as empty holes through which you could see the dark, grainy background of the picture like a dust storm in a prairie depression.

I believe that this is what can happen when women like Debbie Sims are not heard by literacy organizations trying to design programs. It should not surprise us when we hear, as we do, the quiet anxiety coming from literacy organizations all over the continent about the difficulty they are having with recruitment and attendance in their Family Literacy programs. What woman with a shred of dignity would take the risk of seeking help from a place that might see her as Coors sees her? We should not be surprised that women who live in the daily crisis of poverty have trouble with regular attendance at literacy programs. We should marvel that they come at all.

The shock of the Coors ad made us very glad that we had spent such a long time working with students and struggling with our own preconceptions before we tried to raise the money for a Family Literacy project. By the time we did go after money we had developed as an organization a set of goals for our *Literacy and the Parent* project that we all believed honoured the aspirations of our learners and respected their strength and potential. This is how we defined our goals:

1. To help parents improve their reading and writing using materials relevant to parenting and to their children's education.

2. To help parents develop a home environment that emphasizes reading as a family activity and that nurtures learning in all its diverse forms.

3. To help parents develop the skills to advocate, on behalf of their children and themselves, the best education their families can receive.

4. To promote community and institutional awareness of the barriers illiterate parents face in reaching these goals.

5. To advocate the removal of those barriers.

Our parents group has been meeting every week now for three months. That is not enough time to evaluate a program but there is no doubt in our minds that we have started something worthwhile. We feel that it will always be in the planning stages because the parents in the program feel free to decide what they are doing. They start talking at the coffee machine when they come in on Friday mornings and they don't stop after the meeting is over. They come into the office or phone each other or the staff whenever they feel like it. (I said it was a damned uncomfortable place to work.)

They talk about what *Family Literacy* means to them: What do you do when your six year old brings home a used needle she found in the school yard? Why does the Department of Health send home a university-level treatise on chicken pox instead of simply written, practical advice? How do you make your son's grade two teacher understand that you care deeply about his reading problems when you are terrified that she'll find out you have a reading problem yourself?

After they had met for two weeks our parents group decided to rename itself the Family Issues

> “Many were surprised that mothers with low literacy skills fear that their children could be taken from them on this basis. One participant was uncomfortable with blaming Children's Services, educational systems, and Public Health.
>
> ...
>
> Realize there is a population of parents who are, due to drugs, mental health, and poverty related issues, abusive toward their children. They are unable to participate in your project because these other issues cloud their lives. Unfortunately, these people do need legal intervention for the children.”
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

Group. I think it's a credit to them and to the organization that they felt free to decide who they were and why they were there.

And yes, they do learn, in a formal sense. They have asked for and read information on baby and child care, on incest and abuse, on health; they want to read fairy tales and fables and rhymes too and I think they will. They have written lists of questions for school teachers, trustees, public health officials; they have invited some of these people in and grilled them. They have spoken and written about the subtle and overt oppression in their daily lives and how these things block their learning opportunities and those of their children. And, although I am depressed most of the time about my society's failure to take their issues into account, I think they are being heard more than they were before. At any rate, it is impossible to say that such rich, informative activity is not adult literacy.

Although it is largely unplanned activity, it is not directionless. It seems to be catalyzed at the coffee machine, but it is sustained and supported by an extremely skilful staff and a sizable group of hand-picked volunteers notable for their sensitivity, life experience, open-mindedness and knowledge of the support systems in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, the group's staff co-ordinator, Michele Kuhlmann, tells me that she feels like she has gotten off a roller coaster at the end of every Friday morning. Working with women in literacy, Michele thinks, is where you find the outer limits around the notion of curriculum.

"If you create a *safe* place for women to sit down" Michele says, "they will set their own agenda. Give people choices about what they can learn, like 'Do you want to talk about a healthy diet or shall we work on balancing the monthly budget?' – Those *choices* are not the same as starting without an agenda."

"Surprisingly," says Michele, "it doesn't leave you at a loss as a literacy facilitator, although it does seem a bit scary to those of us who were trained never to leave home without a lesson plan. There is a lot of security built into this model. You go in believing that people are there because they have important things to discuss; they do. Then you help them to get the information they are asking for, and they use it."

It is certainly more difficult for an adult education organization to plan programs in this chaotic, inclusive, creative way. We have to think differently about efficiency. It takes a lot more work from the staff, the students, the volunteers and the community when we are constantly trying to establish the meaning of what we do. It takes longer. It takes much more talk. It is intellectually confusing and even painful, in the way that learning from the lives of other human beings can often be.

I think that our organization has agreed that it is worth it because it makes the things we do together in this deprived, fractious, struggling place we call *community* better than they would have been.

"It pushes me forward in thinking about increased learner participation in planning.

...

How do funders respond to various names for literacy programs?

...

... plain language ... so that written material is easier to cope with for everyone."

... from Participants' Response Cards

INTERPRETING LITERACY: CULTURE & CONTEXT

TAKING MULTILINGUAL ISSUES INTO ACCOUNT: TORONTO

V. Manuel Pinto
Director of the Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre
Adult educator from Peru

Brenda Duncombe
Adult education specialist, Immigrant communities
Initiator of ESL literacy programs in Toronto

TREATING LEARNERS AS EXPERTS: HALIFAX NOVA SCOTIA

Gary MacDonald
Community worker with Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Designer and teacher, ESL literacy programs

SNOWDRIFT CHIPEWYAN PROJECT: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Joanne Barnaby
Educator and activist on aboriginal language issues and land claims
Executive Director, Dene Cultural Institute in Yellowknife

Eleanor Millard
Literacy consultant, Keewatin Region, Arctic College
Coordinator, Snowdrift project
ABE/ESL instructor, Yukon, NWT
Former Yukon MLA and Minister of Education
Researcher, native ESL literacy

THIS WORKSHOP DESCRIBED the philosophy and operation of the Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre in Toronto and the value of meeting first language literacy needs of immigrants. The presenters made it clear that first language literacy for minority groups is not to be confused with ESL literacy or even ESL. It is literacy in one's first language.

The group examined some case studies of specific low-education adults who have come to the Centre. Although there was not enough information to fully explore the needs of these case-study students, the discussion generated valuable debate over the relationship between ESL and mother-tongue literacy. The debate centred around whether first language literacy is a sufficient end in itself or whether it must be a bridge to ESL. The general consensus was that it depends on the students and their needs, uses, and objectives for both the ESL and first language literacy.

The most important issue raised was that immigrant learning needs must no longer be so easily limited to ESL or English literacy. These must be expanded to include numeracy, transitional classroom skills needed to succeed in ESL classes, employment related training, problem solving and organizing around one's own experienced blocks, and problems encountered in taking part in this society.

... from the Facilitator's Report

TAKING MULTILINGUAL ISSUES INTO ACCOUNT: TORONTO

WHAT ARE THE MOTHER-TONGUE LITERACY NEEDS OF NON-ENGLISH/FRENCH SPEAKING ADULTS IN CANADA? WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN FIRST LANGUAGE LITERACY SKILLS AND THE STUDY AND ACQUISITION OF A SECOND LANGUAGE? CONSIDER THESE ISSUES AS WELL AS DIFFERENT STRATEGIES DESIGNED TO DEAL WITH THE MULTILINGUAL AND MULTCULTURAL SIDE OF LEARNERS' LITERACY NEEDS.

Manuel Pinto and Brenda Duncombe

The Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre in Toronto began operation in 1985. As a result of the Toronto Board of Education promoting literacy among Spanish speaking parents in area-central public schools, an office for the Centre and program space was established at 756 Ossington Ave. Its mission statement is:

> "The Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre develops and maintains first language literacy programs as determined by the needs of the community. Sensitive to the changing needs of learners, the Centre encourages them to achieve their own goals by offering programs which contribute to first language literacy, numeracy, interest and job-related skills, survival and settlement orientation, and introduction to English as a Second Language and Citizenship."

The philosophical basis of the Centre is that every person who has a distinct culture, defined by its language and literature and rooted in his/her home country, has a right to literacy in his/her first language. Literacy in one's first language is in some cases a necessary route towards the attainment of literacy in a second language. It is always a more efficient way of acquiring the skills of reading and writing in any language.

The focus is on literacy as social empowerment and as a means to the recognition of one's human dignity. First language literacy is a basic human right, independent of citizenship, nationality, ethnic background, race, class, or gender. Therefore, literacy for the Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre is a wide and deep concept which does not limit its definition to competency in reading and writing.

Why Teach Literacy in a First Language First

Pedagogically, first language literacy provides individuals with learning tools and with channels of analysis, reflection, and personal experience which cannot be accessed while trying to stumble imperfectly through communication attempts in English.

That literacy in one's first language is a human right is another reason for starting with first language literacy. People need the opportunity to learn to read and write in their own primary language of use both because of its connection to learning (first language literacy as a learning tool) and because of first language literacy needs that operate in their lives (social, religious, letter writing with family back home, access to status in one's own ethnic community).

Why First Language Literacy Should Go Beyond the Skills of Reading and Writing

There are over 150,000 non-English/French newcomers in Ontario who have less than Grade 9 education. More than 100,000 of these reside in Metropolitan Toronto. These actual and potential learners range in age from 16 to 80 years and live in a wide range of circumstances making classification difficult.

Some causes of their illiteracy are: social, economic and political injustice in countries which oppress their populations; the lack of opportunity people had, and still have, to attend school; and the war situation in some of these countries which disrupted, and continues to disrupt, the education of the people. As a result of these situations, these young, middle-aged and elderly men and women must now be given opportunities to participate in first language literacy programs here.

Participants come to the Centre from a variety of circumstances. Some immigrants and refugees came from the countryside or shanty towns and often lacked the opportunity to obtain an education. Others have studied sometimes up to Grade 6 but are now functionally illiterate because of lack of an opportunity to use his/her literacy skills. Still others arrived in Canada many years ago and are not yet fully integrated into our society because, despite some fluency in oral English or French, they cannot read or write in English, French or their first language. Some are working in menial jobs and want to upgrade their employment status. Some have retired and want to use their leisure time profitably to enhance the remaining years of their lives. Many are unemployed and cannot obtain or maintain their jobs because of limited literacy skills. Others of the unemployed lack literacy skills in both their first and second language and cannot get job training to face the challenge of our industrialized society.

First language literacy can be a bridge, arming participants with the confidence to then enter ESL and other educational and training programs and to participate more fully in this society.

First Language Literacy and Curriculum

There is a need to develop learner-centred curriculum for first language literacy within the context of Metro's multicultural and multiracial society. First language literacy cannot focus on the language structure; it must go beyond these limits. In addition, first language literacy cannot be purely an educational service; it must also be seen as part of the settlement process through which all new Canadians pass.

It is important not only to listen to learners when they express their difficulties with reading and writing, but also to listen to them when they mention their aspirations and their difficulties finding or keeping a job, finding job training, helping their children with their homework, gaining self-esteem and self-confidence, and finding ways of participating in the economic, social and political life in society.

These realities should tell us that when we develop curriculum for first language literacy we cannot just develop curriculum to address the reading and writing difficulties of learners. We have to be able to identify the relationship between this educational aspect and the difficulties and hopes illiterates and functional illiterates have to face in Canadian society.

It is the aim of the CMLC to develop programs and curriculum using an holistic approach and Paulo Freire's Psycho-Socio Method. As J. Miller claims "... curriculum development should consider personal and social change. The learner is not just seen as an intelligent person who needs to develop or improve his/her intellectual growth, but also to grow as a person with aesthetic, moral, physical, spiritual and social needs." Therefore, the curriculum and the learners do not just interact at the cognitive level of learning how to write a sentence by itself. Instead, the sentence has to be interconnected to the psychological and social needs of the learner and the society as a whole.

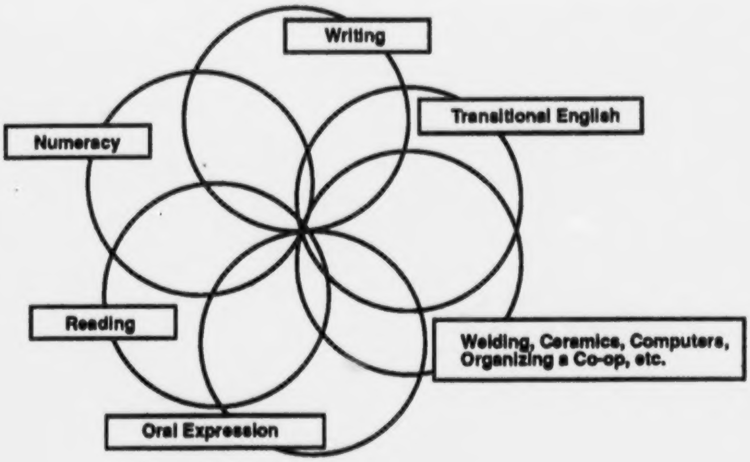
According to this position first language literacy cannot just concentrate on learning grammatical structures. It must be learner-centred. The curriculum has to fit the learner's psychological and social needs. It has to empower learners to take control of their lives and be able to participate and contribute to social justice and change.

Program Models

The methodology behind first language literacy for non- English/French people does not focus only on reading and writing. The underlying context is that learners should develop critical thinking for a truly multicultural society. The program is developed actively with the learner. To meet the diversity of needs and expectations the program includes such things as numeracy, writing, reading, oral expression, transitional English, technical skills like welding, computers, ceramics, and organizational skills blended together.

The CMLC has a first language literacy-linked skills program for the Spanish speaking people who have experience in construction and are planning to work in construction. Their program includes upgrading in reading and writing Spanish, numeracy, transitional English, and reading blueprints.

It is paramount that model programs be developed which can respond to the needs of non-English/French women and men of all ages who come from the various language groups and who have limited literacy skills. This model must support the development of critical thinking and support the learner's personal and social growth.



CONTEXT: Learners should develop critical thinking for a truly multicultural society.

> "... appreciated the central idea that ESL is not always the logical 1st step for immigrants to Canada.
>
> ...
>
> ... important to be careful not to generalize about linguistic and cultural groups.
>
> ...
>
> Educational needs of immigrants must not be seen as just ESL needs.
>
> ...
>
> Should we be trying to offer more content in first language rather than English?
>
> ...
>
> If we are considering offering some I-CARE ESL tutoring we should perhaps be looking for bilingual tutors."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

MACDONALD DISCUSSED AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM he has devised for newcomers to Canada who already possess the rudiments of English language. One of the objectives is to make the group relevant enough that the participants continue networking with each other after the program ends.

Participants in Macdonald's program are motivated to attend because they feel inadequate in English language even though they already exhibit some competency in the language. The group convenes as an Advanced English Language course. MacDonald then engages participants in discussions about differences and perceptions of culture, values, and beliefs – comparing their own with each other's and with their perceptions of Canada.

His belief is that newcomers need more opportunities to speak the language, build confidence in language usage and increase cultural understanding. They also need opportunities to showcase for themselves and Canadians the skills, talents, and expertise they bring with them from their country of origin. This kind of exploration forms bonds of friendship which outlast short term programs.

The kinds of discussions and activities generated by this process include: yard sales; gallery shows of art work; use as consultants to tutor training groups; telling of their experiences as immigrants to influential groups like the school board, municipal council, libraries, business groups; dancing classes; investigation of the history of immigration and employment in Canada; exploration of problem solving approaches consistent with Canadian culture; and understanding of the Canadian legal and political structure.

What does this mean for literacy education? A similar approach could be used in a literacy program to value the lives of adults, to encourage them to advise on and participate in directing their programs and to provide experiences which could lead to formation of ongoing support groups.

... from the Facilitator's Report

TREATING LEARNERS AS EXPERTS: HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

Gary MacDonald

CAN PROJECTS FUNDED ON SHOE-STRING BUDGETS BY SMALL ORGANIZATIONS BECOME ONGOING? EXPLORE PROJECT DESIGNS WHERE STUDENTS ORGANIZE CHILDCARE, ESTABLISH SUPPORT GROUPS AND INITIATE NEW CLASSES.

> Each of us is the result of our culturally complex life . . . with the education and the experience of not only a few years but of centuries."
>
> – J. Krishnamurti

What is the experience of newcomers (landed immigrants/refugees) as minorities in a population which is largely of white, Anglo- Saxon background? What is the individual's place in that community? How does he or she come to better understand that community? How does the newcomer see him/herself in that environment? How does the new-comer find his or her place in that environment? How can the newcomer be assisted when there are very few, if any, programs of support?

The workshop will examine two programs which brought newcomers together and the factors which became important in the process. The first was the establishing of ongoing support groups. The second was more specific – the creation of an art exhibition by and for newcomer artists to the Halifax area.

To understand these two programs, it is important to understand the realities of the Halifax environment for newcomers. Halifax has a small number of newcomers. Yet it is a place where significant events have taken place in the last few years. Atlantic Canada is the arrival point of the largest single group of Sheik refugee claimants and also the largest single group of Tamul refugee claimants in Canada in the last few years. These events were brought to the attention of the media and therefore to the general public. Both events led directly to the recalling of the Canadian Parliament and to changes in Canada's immigration laws regarding refugee claimants.

As well, there have been significant events in both the black and native communities. An outbreak of physical violence between black and white students erupted in one of the Halifax metro areas schools. The immigrant community in Halifax is very aware of both of these events. In addition, there have been the effects of the Donald Marshall enquiry.

In the Halifax metro area most immigrants do not remain for any length of time. Most move within the first year of residence in Canada to larger urban centres.

There is also little, if any, funding from either the Halifax municipal government or from the provincial government of Nova Scotia for services and programs directed to the immigrant community. Ethnic organizations and groups remain small in size.

The Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) is the only full time settlement organization in the province. MISA discovered that among its clientele were a number of newcomers who had come individually to Canada. Many of these people expressed a feeling of isolation from the community at large and expressed no real identification with an ethnic organization or more informal group. A significant number spoke English quite well.

Ongoing Support Groups

In its exploration of new programs directed toward individuals who felt no identification with their present environment, MISA looked at programs already available and the reasoning behind the creation of them. It was found that the majority of requests from clients were for English as a Second Language classes. However, it was obvious that a number of clients who were requesting this service were already fluent in the English language. It was believed that some clients were requesting permission to attend English as a Second Language classes because of having no other program choices.

Therefore, groups of individuals already fluent in the English language were invited for what was called a *Class for Advanced Speakers of English*. Rather than engage in the traditional English as a Second Language program, the facilitator of the group discussed the experience of settlement in a new country, particularly the Halifax area.

The group was introduced to general patterns of experience as already identified in the literature based on immigrant settlement in Canada. Already identified frames of reference within which newcomers make assumptions and decisions were examined. This included looking at culture of origin, personal history, social class, environment, personal experience and gender. The individuals within the group were assisted in realizing that it was through their own personal experience of these factors that they came to understand the new culture and environment. Much of this was

> " I enjoyed this workshop. I don't have much to say. I am a student myself. I hope you people can understand this?
>
> ...
>
> Are we trying to create cultural integration or collaboration? A mosaic or melange?
>
> ...
>
> More discussion is always needed on the never-ending problem of integrating the immigrant into Canadian society rather than just with each other. "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

> "...need for immigrants to organize themselves around their own wishes, felt needs and learn from this process how to participate in this new setting... How do they gain access on their own to aspects of society from which they feel excluded?
>
> ...
>
> Many participants express frustration with the current funding situation. There is still more need to address this issue. How do program like this funded on short term limited budgets become ongoing? "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

done through individuals talking about their cultures of origin to the group and a comparing them with the Halifax experience.

The group also examined the frames of reference in which newcomers understand the community. Again, information from literature on immigrant settlement was used. The group looked at the role of the family, employment, community, and agency.

Individuals in the group also discussed their experiences and perceptions regarding barriers to newcomers in Canada and, more locally, those found in the host community in its attempts to serve the newcomer.

Again, already available information was used as a basis for discussion. The group examined and discussed the barriers of language; the lack of orientation to differences of cultural values, systems or traditions; the factor of suspicion or mistrust; and the lack of awareness of resources. This was compared and contrasted to barriers as experienced by the host community. This discussion included the barriers of language, the lack of familiarity with cultural differences or backgrounds, the focus on the cause of the problem as individual and cultural differences only, and the lack of awareness of resources.

At this point individuals within the group began to focus on a stronger understanding of the circumstances of the new environment within which they were living. Individuals began to speak of finding comfort in the knowledge that there were others who experienced the same or similar problems in their settlement process.

The group then began to discuss perceptions of values. Participants were asked to identify values which were important to their own lives. They were asked to compare and contrast these with values which they perceived as being important to people who were from the Canadian culture by birth. As a group, the values that were most important for themselves were identified as family, security, a sense of accomplishment, national security, self-respect, and true friendship. Those identified as being most important for those born in Canada and therefore *Canadian* values were a comfortable life, freedom, and a world of peace and happiness. This information was used to further discuss cultural differences and values.

At the conclusion of this part of the program the group was asked to discuss ideas for future meetings. The group was asked to base its decisions on what settlement experiences were important for group members in the Halifax area.

Social conversation was identified as an important skill. The group also expressed a desire to understand the history of immigration and employment in Canada. As well, the group wanted to have guest speakers from both the black and native communities of Nova Scotia. Social dancing was also identified as an important skill to acquire.

Later, in addition to the on-going sessions, the group began organizing social activities. This included pot-luck dinners, sports activities, and out of town excursions.

Conclusion

Attendance and participation within the group was very high. Individuals exhibited growth in security and confidence. Individuals began speaking more objectively and openly of their settlement experience. Individuals began to volunteer their services as presenters in MISA public education programs. There was an increase in the outward expressions of concern and interest in the welfare of fellow group members. Telephone calls and visits were made to those who were ill or for other reasons hadto miss meetings. Letters were written back and forth to those who moved to other parts of Canada. Together the group began to celebrate Canadian holidays such as Christmas, New Year's, and Canada Day.

Conversational English improved, especially amongst those who initially had a more limited knowledge of English.

Newcomers' Art Exhibition

A second example of newcomers working together within the framework of a support group was presented. MISA discovered that among its clients who had arrived within the last year were six professional artists from China, Iran, Japan and Poland. All six were new to the Halifax metro area as well as to Canada. All six were experiencing great difficulties in gaining any recognition as professional artists.

MISA's community worker brought the artists together as a group and discussed with them the possibilities of mounting their own art exhibition. The artists readily expressed interest in such a project.

The group met on a regular basis and planned the exhibition to tie in with the Canada Day, July 1st celebrations using the theme title, *Thank You, Canada.* With the help of the community worker the artists contacted galleries, art dealers and other professional artists within the Halifax metro area for assistance in framing, stretching canvases, and other practical aspects of mounting an exhibition.

A poster advertising the art exhibition was designed and distributed by the artists. Letters of invitation were sent by the artists to political representatives, other professional artists working in the Halifax area, and others whom the group thought might be interested in attending.

The opening of the exhibition was held in conjunction with a Canadian citizenship court ceremony. Both events shared in a joint reception.

The media was invited. The artists and their works appeared on regional television. The exhibition itself was covered by the Halifax newspapers.

Conclusion

The experience of mounting an art exhibition brought together individuals who were facing similar problems and united them into a single, positive action. The newcomer artists met and were well received by professional artists from Halifax who offered their assistance in the practical aspects of mounting an exhibition. The community itself became more aware of the presence and work of the newcomer artists.

The newcomer artists gained a sense of what they were able to accomplish as a group. They came to know one another better. They developed an ongoing concern for each another's welfare and professional progress.

> "We need to be patient in encouraging learner involvement, letting this happen naturally with positive encouragment and letting it evolve at a pace the learners are comfortable with.
>
> ...
>
> ... integration of isolated/marginalized people into mainstream ... "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

THIS WAS A FASCINATING WORKSHOP discussing the dilemmas, promises and limitations of the whole language approach to literacy education in the Dene culture.

There is no written tradition in the Chipewyan language except in the recent past related to the church. The question, therefore, arises: is it possible to teach literacy through a whole language approach in an oral culture where few are fully literate in either the first language or the second? The Department of Education prefers this method. However, tutors want more structured methods despite understanding the concept. They do not feel confident in their own language skills or understanding of the structure of either Chipewyan or English.

Many of the Dene people have accepted the idea that they may jeopardize their economic future by becoming literate first in the Chipewyan language. Yet, there is a moral difficulty, clearly recognized by the Dene elders, that teaching literacy only in English contributes to cultural genocide. There is the feeling that the language has to be written down in order to survive. Because there is a limited time before the speakers of the language die, there is pressure to develop Chipewyan literacy among the younger generation. How do we reconcile the need for preservation of the language with the need for English, which offers promises of work opportunities?

Aboriginal language literacy is a request from the *people* via the band councils. Despite adoption of the Aboriginal Literacy Action Plan by the government little funding has been forthcoming. Because the government and the governed do not always see things the same way, some bands suggest they would have been better off figuring out how to do it themselves thereby maintaining local control.

... from the Facilitator's Report

SNOWDRIFT CHIPEWYAN PROJECT: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Joanne Barnaby and Eleanor Millard

IS A "WHOLE LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH" APPROPRIATE IN THE ABORIGINAL CULTURAL CONTEXT? CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS ON HOW TO TACKLE LITERACY ISSUES IN NATIVE COMMUNITIES BASED ON THIS PROJECT'S RESULTS.

Is Whole Language Possible in Aboriginal Settings?

Background

Snowdrift, Northwest Territories, is located on the eastern end of Great Slave Lake, accessible only by air and water. It is a community of approximately 300 people, over 90% native Indian or Dene as they are known in the region. Because of its isolation the aboriginal language, Chipewyan (an Athapaskan dialect), survives relatively fluently in Snowdrift when compared with other Athapaskan and Chipewyan communities.

Early in 1989, a proposal from the Snowdrift Indian Band and the Dene Cultural Institute for the establishment of an adult Chipewyan literacy class in Snowdrift was accepted by the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), Advanced Education. By July, the Native Adult Education Resource Centre, affiliated with Okanagan College in B.C., was awarded the contract for a pilot project in response to the proposal. An adult educator from the Yukon Territory, Eleanor Millard, was subcontracted to co-ordinate the project and to train an instructor.

The pilot project was completed in three phases. Phase One (six days) was developmental. In this phase the community was to establish its objectives for the implementation (post-pilot) period and to determine a reliable organizational structure. During Phase Two (29 days over three months) the pilot project trained two instructors and had actual instruction of students. Phase Three saw the development and publication of a generic model for Dene literacy instruction in a Dene literacy manual.

The pilot project enjoyed the active support of several groups. Interested parties included the GNWT Departments of Education and Language and Culture, the Dene Cultural Institute, and the Snowdrift Indian Band. A Chipewyan Literacy Working Group had been formed earlier to advise the Band and the contractor and to supervise the project both in its pilot and implementation stages. The Working Group met on site in Snowdrift and consisted of the Band Council manager, the school principal (a Dene), the two instructor-trainees, a Local Education Authority member, and two out-of-town members, one from the Dene Cultural Institute (who attended one meeting) and the Department of Education's Chipewyan Language Program specialist from Fort Smith, who had an automobile accident early in the project and was unable to attend any meetings. Those who were able to attend meetings did so, and immediate decisions were dealt with expeditiously. Enthusiasm for the project was high and support was positive.

Contractor and Departmental Expectations

In Phase One, the proposed design called for the determination of long-term objectives by the Chipewyan Literacy Working Group. This was in order to determine the structure and the kind of instructor training required to meet the needs of the students who would be taught in the implementation stage. In Phase Two, instructor training as designed was a full day, five-day week for six weeks which would allow for enough time to experiment and to practice teaching. The design of the training demanded a degree of confidence in the language and creativity in instructional techniques by the instructors.

The Department of Education and the contractor openly endorsed whole language philosophy and stressed the importance of training with whole language techniques. Whole language was defined as (paraphrased from pages 2 and 3 of the final report):

> ... community-based education in which the form and content are always context-specific. Learners identify their own concerns and priorities through activities that elicit their authentic feelings, attitudes, opinions and hopes. Methods and materials are designed to increase learner participation and to strengthen their capacity for critical thinking. The literacy program is built around an inductive process of problem-posing and communal problem-solving in which teachers and students participate on an equal basis. The major purpose of a whole language approach is to encourage students to use all areas of language in a mutually reinforcing fashion, built on the essential unity of language and the oral skills of the students. Teaching the component parts of language contributes little to improved reading and writing.

Pilot Project Results

All of the groups interested in the pilot project were concerned with meeting the following objectives:

1. to train an instructor;
2. to discover the applicability of the results of the pilot project to other Dene communities;
3. to actually teach some adult students Chipewyan literacy.

All three of these groups' minimum objectives were met by the project: two instructors received approximately 45 hours training apart from the class where they experienced teaching first hand; the general findings of the project were applicable to other communities, and differences were clear; the students in the class expressed satisfaction with the literacy training they acquired.

However, the results were limited in very important ways. The Phase One objective of having the Working Group determine the ultimate structure and population to be taught was never realized even at the end of the pilot project. Discussion was still taking place at the end of the pilot about having a needs assessment done in the community to determine who was interested in learning Chipewyan literacy, and there appeared a danger that the students might end up being the few non-Chipewyan speakers in the community (all non-Dene) who wanted to learn the oral language.

The training of the instructors in Phase Two was re-designed to use the students who were only available to attend evening classes, four times a week. From 30 hours instruction expected per week, it was reduced to six. The design of the training was experiential and appeared to call for a higher level of language and instructional skill than was found in the instructors. The result was that, due to several factors, efforts to encourage the instructors to try whole language techniques were not productive. They were not conversant with the structure of Chipewyan language, although apparently orally fluent, and could not analyze discourse produced. They relied heavily on the oral/sight/memorization techniques with which they had been taught Chipewyan literacy by linguists. Lesson planning and reporting was minimally done and lessons often deteriorated into social visits. Available visual aids were not integrated into the lessons. No curriculum for the implementation stage was produced. A community project (painting Chipewyan signs and producing a calendar) was well received by the class although, with the limited time available, the time for language instruction suffered.

Perhaps the most important limitation to project objectives was the fact that none of the four regular students were as fluent orally in the language as anticipated. At least one student came from another dialect area and did not recognize some of the vocabulary and sounds, another student was only passively bilingual (did not speak), and none of the students were truly confident in the language. Neither the students nor the instructors were conversant with the formal level of the language, which had been endorsed by linguists during a lengthy Dene Standardization Project as the level to be used for literacy. This last condition was probably the most restrictive factor, since it meant that transposing oral language directly to written, a basic process in whole language technique, was difficult since the informal language of Chipewyan youth (which is more contracted) was frowned upon. Some of the instruction was required to be oral because of the preferred formal register and the informal use of the language by the students.

Despite all these obvious barriers, students quickly demonstrated acquisition of a basic level of Chipewyan literacy, and expressed satisfaction with their learning.

Discussion of Results

1. Dene Language Retention and Literacy Acquisition

No statistical research is available on the use of oral Chipewyan, but it is readily heard in Snowdrift where it is used in social discourse by persons of all ages. English is used, however, for all 'important' transactions. For instance, the instructors would discuss each others' hairstyles in Chipewyan, but would clarify teaching exercises and detail vocabulary differences to the students in English. One might be led into thinking that the use of both languages displays a true bilingualism. On closer scrutiny, it is apparent that rather than a fluency in both Chipewyan and English, the competence may be termed a *semi-lingualism* in both languages, with a complex level of usag not available in either English or Chipewyan, and *code-switching* or use of the easiest language for expression being confused with bilingualism. This may be the result of the acquisition of English as a second language, and the rapid deterioration of the more creative, formal *elders'* language as it is influenced by the demands of English schooling and the pervasive presence of English in most communication outside of the home.

At one time, Fort Chipewyan in northern Alberta was known as 'the Athens of the North' for its very high usage of Chipewyan literacy. This was influenced and encouraged by the Catholic Church through the use of Chipewyan syllabic transcriptions of the Bible based on Cree orthography. The use of literacy spread beyond ecclesiastical needs and the older generation of Snowdrift residents remember using Chipewyan syllabics in many practical ways. However, with the coming of reliable communication technology and the rapid spread of English, the use of Chipewyan literacy has virtually disappeared. Recently, the acceptance by the Dene Standardization Project of the use of the Roman alphabet over syllabics has created resistance by the elders.

The teaching of Dene literacy is seen by many as a means of preserving the languages. However, unless the oral base is expanded along with literature expression, it is doubtful if either oral or literate use will survive for any practical use through the next generation. The acceptance of literacy simply as reading and writing skills which are an additional communication skill to oral use rather than a cure-all for language (and therefore cultural) preservation would focus the efforts for aboriginal literacy more realistically.

The teaching and learning of Dene literacy is presently in its infancy and although there are dreams of a Chipewyan newsletter for the language region and minutes of Band Council meetings produced for the public in the aboriginal languages, much work needs to be done first. The complex level of literacy required to produce and read the discourse desired is simply not readily available even if there were students willing to learn it. However, the choice of the level of literacy which is to be taught will determine if the written language will be solely a process of transposition of oral language or if it will be a lively, creative new expression for the Dene languages, enhancing its use and therefore its survival.

The problem: The relationship between retention of oral aboriginal languages and their production in a literature mode appears to be very close. How does this affect the teaching of aboriginal literacy, the training of literacy instructors, and the involvement of the general community?

2. Community Development and Dene Literacy

Recently there has been legislative endorsement of several aboriginal languages in the NWT as official languages. However, there has been no policy and budget support to encourage much-needed research, professional language educators, school curriculum, or other programs that would give hope for the survival of the languages. The Department of Education has made some effort to teach aboriginal languages in the school, but the response has not been a bilingual or immersion program. Because of the differing levels and types of languages in the Dene region, it would be difficult to determine individual school and community needs and to meet those needs within reasonable budgets. Further complicating this picture is the fact that many communities themselves do not accept that aboriginal languages should be maintained by the school since they sense that it may be at the expense of English instruction and that employment requires English.

The problem: The NWT has the lowest level of functional English literacy in Canada (estimated at 75% for aboriginal peoples). How can the priorities of aboriginal language survival be coupled with the economic demands of modern Northern life?

3. Dene Literacy Instructor Training: Whole Language

Instructor and student level of oral aboriginal language has a direct impact on the content and approach of instructor training. Whole language techniques which transpose oral language to written are particularly dependent upon oral fluency. It is assumed that oral fluency will assure a foothold into literacy because it is not necessary then to teach items such as vocabulary and grammar, as would be the case with learning an unfamiliar language. However, it appears that problems arise with using whole language techniques when student and instructor oral language proficiency is not fluent.

The general lack of linguistic understanding of the language may affect the teaching of it. Though views on the importance and the extent of grammatical knowledge necessary to teach in a whole language approach vary, the evidence from Snowdrift appears to point to the need for at least a minimal understanding of the language structure by the instructor. Controlled manipulation of the discourse produced, pulling out the language patterns and concepts that need teaching, requires a confidence in the language that was not available.

Instructor reluctance to attempt whole language techniques was apparent in Snowdrift, but this is not a phenomenon peculiar to this situation. Language teaching which varies from the traditional memorization/drill routines are often more talked about than done at any level of teaching. But a full understanding of the reasons for reliance on the more traditional methods is needed. In many cases, this type of teaching is the one expected by the students as *real teaching* since this has been the approach in the past. New approaches are not readily adapted to either by the instructor or students. Research on native learning styles consistently suggests that native learners prefer to display a skill publicly only after practising the skill privately until they feel competent in it. This is in

> " Government wants the Whole Language approach used, band councils want Chipewyan language taught, and many learners think learning English is of primary importance as it is currently the dominant language.
>
> ...
>
> What do the Snowdrift people see as their needs? Do they want and will they need English literacy perhaps as much as Chipewyan literacy?
>
> ...
>
> Could being totally learner-centred deny access to the language of power?
>
> ...
>
> How can we/they reconcile the need to use English with the need to preserve aboriginal culture? "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

direct contrast to our expectation displayed in our teaching styles that we should learn from our mistakes and attempt trial practises until we get it right. The language experience technique calls for direct transcription of oral language to written, mistakes and all. The hesitation to use the technique both by students and instructors may have come from resistance to using the informal register in the case of Snowdrift because it is 'wrong' and they run the risk of ridicule by putting it in a written form.

The problem: Whole language philosophy suggests more than language teaching techniques to be learned. The interactive dialogical process involved which is based on real-life content is worthy of in-depth training for aboriginal instructors. Given the barriers to this, is whole language possible in aboriginal settings?

Recommendations of the Report

The recommendations discuss a broad view of implementing aboriginal literacy programs for the whole of the Territories, with an emphasis on the Dene group of languages.

Developmental aspects for the implementation of strong aboriginal literacy programs include recommendations for the implementation of a Territorial policy, thorough research into the current state of the languages, the settling of basic management issues, the endorsement of local control and support, and evaluation of programs and projects.

Recommendations for instructor training include the training of literacy coordinators and cover details such as the development of aboriginal literacy curricula for the various languages, which would call for the establishment of a team of educators and linguists working together. The recommendations stress the training and use of instruction that is community-based, student-oriented, and problem-posing, and which gives training support to those instructors needing upgrading of their own language skills. Lastly, the recommendations caution that the endorsement of a whole language philosophy brings with it the need to teach the underlying language skills that are necessary for this creative approach as well as the theory on which the practise is based. This should be done by carefully building on instructors' current skills and being responsive to levels of understanding, needs and cultural perspectives.

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> " I wonder what it means to a people to see their language disappearing?
>
> ...
>
> They tried to provide literacy in their home language and failed as the learners did not have the same desire especially with the major language of the community being English.
>
> ...
>
> Is language experience an effective method of teaching native people their own language?
>
> ...
>
> Whole language in any community? Is this automatically good for all? I doubt it.
>
> ...
>
> Would Dene teachers teaching Dene kids with Dene as the language of instruction make the difference as a first step? "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

WORKING IT THROUGH:
LITERACY & THE JOB SITE

EXCHANGING VIEWPOINTS: IDENTIFYING OBSTACLES

Tracy Defoe
Consultant, Workplace Training Systems, Open College, Open Learning Agency
Delivery assistance coordinator, *Language at Work*, an ESL Program

Gary Johncox
Vice-president, Human Resources for MacMillan Bloedel Ltd.
Active participant, provincial and national business associations

Don Graham
Co-owner, Canadian Tire Franchise for Metro Vancouver
Initiator of the *Ignition* program, a post-secondary education plan for employees

Marina Melnikoff
Coordinator, B.C. Federation of Labour Literacy Project
Educator and programmer for trade-unions

BEST PROJECT: ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

Tamara Levine
Program coordinator, Eastern Ontario, *BEST*
Responsible for instructor training, *BEST*

READING/WRITING ON-THE-JOB: BRITISH COLUMBIA

Emily Goetz
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WORKBASE: LONDON, ENGLAND

Lucy Bonnerjea
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Lecturer, London School of Economics
Educational consultant for governments and universities in
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THE WORKSHOP WAS A PANEL PRESENTATION and open discussion on current issues for workplace literacy programs. Each panel member gave a short overview of one aspect of workplace literacy.

Tracy Defoe spoke about marketing of programs to companies and identified potential obstacles to initiating programs.

Gary Johncox presented data resulting from a survey conducted by the Conference Board of Canada of the top 500 Canadian companies regarding attitudes and practises in workplace literacy issues.

Don Graham described the *Ignition* program established for Canadian Tire employees who were not, by choice, part of the 5% of employees on a management training program.

Marina Melnikoff presented an overview of the involvement of the B.C. Federation of Labour. No written material from her presentation is available.

Some major obstacles were identified, including economic realities during recession for both employers and unions; employer perception that literacy is not a priority because new/young workers are now being thoroughly screened for literacy skills before being hired; and lack of studies which effectively attribute serious accidents, system breakdowns or work problems to limited literacy skills among workers. A need was identified for a full time coordinator or outreach worker to negotiate with business on an ongoing basis regarding program development, and a literacy advisory committee, with representatives from workers, union, management and education, to suggest possible directions and guildelines for establishing programs. Emphasis should be on worker-centred learning in order to create a well educated, motivated workforce.

... from the Facilitator's Report

EXCHANGING VIEWPOINTS: IDENTIFYING OBSTACLES

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO ESTABLISHING WORKPLACE UPGRADING PROGRAMS? BEGIN TO ADDRESS THIS CRITICAL QUESTION BASED ON THE DIVERSE VIEWPOINTS OF FOUR PANELISTS WHO SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES.

Tracy Defoe
Workplace Training Consultant

Identifying Obstacles

Workplace up-grading programs take place in the *real* world of politics, pride, prejudice and power. These programs are complicated and challenging for an educator. Far from the insulation of a classroom, each industry and each workplace is a bit of an intercultural experience. As a consultant in parts unfamiliar, an explorer invited in to listen, watch and make suggestions, I've learned a lot.

What are the obstacles to basic workplace education? In my experience the obstacles are easy to identify: fear, suspicion, prejudice, our social structure, time, and yes, money.

The obstacles are almost universal, but they can be overcome. We have to start with ourselves, and ones we build. We need to figure out why we're there, what our issues and motivations are. Then we have to look around at institutions, and funders and individuals, and help to throw some light on the obstacles they build, and the issues they hold dear.

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My assumptions about the concerns of business, unions, workers, governments and educational institutions have been stretched and sometimes discarded. Now I try to follow my best intercultural survival rules – articulate and challenge assumptions, treat everyone with respect, take notes, ask questions, listen.

For every supervisor who's said she want to learn but she's afraid to try and 'fail', I've met an instructor looking for a job who's asked why the government or the company would fund a language or basic skills program on paid time. Or why management would want to train workers at all.

At the time of writing this I have been working on establishing workplace programs for eight months. A grant to Open College from Employment and Immigration Canada to support this activity, and money available to fund programs for participants and employers who qualify for Language at Work under the Canadian Jobs Strategy has addressed both time and money to some degree.

Still, time and money concerns remain important to employers, and to workers, too. Finding time to devote to learning, finding money to pay for the time, and sometimes to pay for replacement workers or in-house tutors as well, make time and money two of the things we often talk about. In another way, time is a huge obstacle in organizing programs because of the long lead time that a decision to try workplace learning usually involves. In Workplace Training Systems we've found nine months to a year to be fairly standard for any training decision, and much longer than that is not out of the ordinary. How many institutions or individuals will invest a year or more to see a program start?

What happens during that long lead time? Usually we face the other obstacles, listen to all parties, develop some trust and some ground rules, try to convert a closed mind to a skeptical one, and do a needs assessment.

In many ways, what we've done to 'market' workplace learning is a process of research and education, assessment and negotiation.

I was asked what advice I would give someone who wants to do something about starting workplace learning in their area. I said that first, they should know why they were there. Why did they personally, and their institutions really want to do this? If they have an agenda, they should face it. Things may get messy, and neutrality will be impossible to maintain. Then, they should do their homework, learn about the companies and industries and groups involved. Read and research and listen and talk.

Most of all, they should be up to the challenge of doing something outside the usual frame of reference for educators. Something with many stakeholders, many viewpoints to reconcile, many egos to reassure, many good and valid concerns. A successful workplace learning project will demand a high level of cooperation, commitment and trust. Amazing as it may seem to some educators, I've found few villains in the business community. The employers we talk to are concerned about feelings and fears and fairness, as well as productivity and profits. The civil servants we've dealt with are incredibly hardworking, enthusiastic and dedicated. It gives you a reason to pause and reconsider.

When I listed fear, suspicion, prejudice, our societal structure, time and money, I wanted to underline that these are on all sides. Educators also prejudge. We, as a society often tacitly accept that some people just won't get very far, and we separate education and work-life and government to the point where putting them together is a feat of hope and imagination.

I believe in lifelong learning. I know that many people will never make it to a community college course, or reach out to a storefront of homefront tutor. Working people with families are busy, busy people. Bringing learning opportunities to them, helping them find ways to learn and work together, makes sense to me.

The first group of workers I interviewed for a needs assessment taught me to not assume that their low language level was a problem for them anywhere but where they said it was a problem. For them, the communication problem was at work. And just like the rest of us, they needed to work. So, they needed to learn.

My message to anyone thinking of getting into workplace learning would be simple: you have a lot to learn; we all have a lot to learn.

> " There is a need for business, labour, and education to cooperate and build mutual understanding to succeed.
>
> ...
>
> We need to include math and science when talking about workplace literacy. "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

Gary H. Johncox
Vice-president, Human Resources
MacMillan Bloedel Limited

It has been a remarkably successful year for raising literacy awareness in Canadian business. Nonetheless, moving from awareness to action will be a very tough proposition indeed over the next few years. This will not be an encouraging message but no one's time here is well served by anything less than the unvarnished truth, at least as I understand it. That is the purpose of this session – to frankly discuss the obstacles. However, it is not all bad. Literacy year has moved business significantly and I would summarize the following real achievements:

1. A better recognition of the value and necessity for a literate, educated workforce.
2. A vague but growing awareness that our own worksites have literacy problems.
3. Some knowledge of how poorly literate workers cope in complex, technological worksites.
4. A realization that our written instructions are needlessly complex and beyond the comprehension of many employees.
5. A realization that reliance on self-reported literacy problems is not likely to reveal the nature of workplace problems.
6. Realization that literacy problems are the single largest cause of workers declining promotions.
7. A realization that grade level achievement is a poor indicator of employee literacy skills.
8. An awareness of the two principal remedial approaches available – namely the community-based basic adult education programs, or the workplace based programs such as BEST or those following the EAP model.

Now, for all of you here, this will seem to be a modest achievement level indeed. But for Canadian business it does represent a significant improvement in awareness, and on its own, a good success for the year dedicated to literacy.

What are the barriers and constraints to moving ahead from this point? They are formidable:

1. Awareness will decline next year as the subject moves off conference agendas. If union-management programs are not substantially in place and remedial programs ready to go, the issue will falter and move back a page or two in our agendas. Seventy-six percent of large Canadian firms have absolutely no form of assistance available or even a policy to deal with it.
2. Business will tell you a recession is already clobbering us. It is here and it does not look mild and shallow. There is an instant refocusing and reordering of priorities in these times. Generally, training retrenches and reverts to core work skills, maintenance and upgrading.
3. The deleterious effect of illiteracy on business is not yet thoroughly understood in day to day terms. In my firm, no industrial accident, recorded case of equipment damage, or serious process error can be traced to illiteracy. Miss-shipment has been. In the absence of a continuing, visible problem, management attention usually moves to something that is visible.
4. The problem is believed to be primarily among older workers, so time alone will provide incremental solutions. This is probably not true. Forty percent of conference board firms now screen new employees for literacy levels. This means fewer younger employees are slipping in through our recruitment process if they have literacy problems.
5. Business may see a simpler solution in rewriting instructions to match employee ability to comprehend. There is no doubt that some effort is needed here in any event.
6. Business is unsure of which model to adopt to provide assistance to workers. To assist in developing a community-based adult basic education facility looks attractive. Costs can be shared among a number of community organizations and help obtained from a regional college. The site is away from the worksite and perhaps less threatening to the worker. However, this model seems to rely on the worker approaching the problem on his own. Alternately, the Ontario Federation of Labour creation, the BEST program, seems to be a highly successful workplace based model. It relies on the worker coming forward and identifying his need to his peers, and it requires individual programs at individual sites, but its success cannot be denied.

This may seem a formidable list of business obstacles but they are realistic ones in today's environment.

I do not want to end on such a negative note, however, so I would like to put this issue in a broader context that is guaranteed to capture business interest. Most of us are convinced of a few simple things:

1. We must make significant changes in our industrial economy if we are to preserve our very high-cost society. Our neighbours to the south are transforming theirs into a cost drive, non-union, unegalitarian, hard-driving, competitive nation. Not a pretty sight.
2. We are not going to succeed in this tough new world if we keep exporting commodities. We must use our well-developed infrastructure to make more highly technological oriented goods and services.
3. We will compete in this new game principally with a superior workforce – highly educated, highly trained and highly motivated.
4. Alas, we have no national strategy in place to do this, and certainly no funds allocated to the task. The cornerstone to such a strategy would clearly be superior education of the workforce. As this view by business takes hold a little more firmly, with or without government support and blessing, we will find ways to get by these obstacles.

Don Graham
Co-owner, Canadian Tire Franchise for Metro Vancouver

Canadian Tire has started a unique scheme in its 21 store Vancouver/Lower Mainland franchise called *Ignition*. Canadian Tire hires high school kids and pays their way through college on condition that they quit their jobs at the store when they graduate.

The education/employment plan was created to solve a common human resources problem among its junior cashiers and warehouse workers – boredom. The youngsters stocking shelves and operating cash registers weren't doing what they wanted with their lives, but job stability and inertia kept them from moving on. The program gives them motivation and at the same time brings in fresh blood and keeps the company's juices flowing.

A reality of the retail business is that two-thirds of the jobs are boring. The *Ignition* program gives the company active, goal-oriented employees plus a public relations boost for minimal cost, and at the same time, returns better-educated, happier young people to society.

Contrary to what most companies ascribe to, we think in many cases it's better for us to be supportive in having people reach their own goals rather than buy into ours.

The program pays up to $3,000 in tuition for each three-year employee or up to $1,000 for each two-year employee. Employees may apply to any full-time post-secondary institution anywhere in the world. They are guaranteed part-time or summer employment if they want it, but on completion of their program must turn in their resignation and leave Canadian Tire within three months.

Canadian Tire pays the schools directly and does not monitor academic standing – if a student quits part-way through a program there will be no recriminations from the company. The point is to get young people started not force them through.

On a human resources level, there is a clear correlation between employee satisfaction and the program. An employee survey shows that people are much happier about their jobs since the initiation of the *Ignition* program.

> "Knowing what business sees as an obstacle makes it easier for me as an educator to know what approach to take when approaching companies.
>
> ...
>
> I am dismayed by the idea that employers are solving the problem now by screening new employees more stringently for literacy skills as a result of the awareness raised about the issue. Yet, 75% of those who will be in the workforce in the year 2000 are already."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

DISCUSSION OF THE *BEST* PROJECT generated much interest in: the cooperation between trade unions, employers and government; worker facilitated learning opportunities; and the development of curriculum around workers' interests and needs.

Many participants wanted to know how we could implement such a program here in B.C. Where will we find funding? How can we motivate business and government to support such a program? Can we access federal monies if the province lacks the interest? What would be the role of colleges and institutions? Some worried that the tutor training is too short and not enough ongoing supervision is supplied.

Participants were also interested in the strategies used by the OFL and individual unions to negotiate these programs with employers. Each union affiliate apparently bargains independently, sometimes as part of the normal collective bargaining, sometimes separately, and sometimes a combination of both.

The proportion of men and women participating in the projects varies from factory to factory depending on which gender is dominant in that industry. Participants are encouraged to continue on in ABE or GED courses offered elsewhere when they are ready to move on. Peer tutors are generally working in jobs similar to those of program participants. *BEST* has always favoured the small group approach. The coordinator passes information between the groups. Suggestions were made to start a network of some kind which would nurture direct communication (ie. a participant written newsletter).

Potential jurisdictional problems that might have arisen over volunteer teachers not being members of a teacher's union were worked out ahead of time. It was suggested that the B.C. Federation of Labour set up a literacy committee to examine this issue in preparation for possible initiation of this type of program. Because the union philosophy is that training includes enriching lives, literacy training is a natural extension of the existing union training programs.

... from the Facilitator's Report

BEST PROJECT: ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

Tamara Levine

WHAT IS LABOUR'S PERSPECTIVE ON LITERACY? ARE THERE ADVANTAGES TO PROVIDING ON-SITE WORKPLACE PROGRAMS? LEARN ABOUT THE BILINGUAL *BASIC EDUCATION FOR SKILLS TRAINING* PROJECT, THE LARGEST LABOUR- RUN WORKPLACE ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM IN NORTH AMERICA, WHICH TRAINS WORKERS TO TEACH OTHER WORKERS TO READ AND WRITE IN MINES, HOSPITALS, FACTORIES, BUSH CAMPS, HOTELS, NURSING HOMES, MUNICIPALITIES, AND EVEN UNIVERSITIES.

Now entering our third year of operation, *BEST* (Basic Education for Skills Training) was developed at a time when literacy was beginning to gain ground as an issue in Canada. With new players and service providers on the scene from a wide range of interests and points of view, it was important to be clear at the outset, and to further clarify as time went on, what the labour movement has to do with literacy.

Why would the labour movement get involved in literacy anyway? Research points to the fact that it is working class kids who by and large are streamed into failure at school, and that this experience has nothing to do with their intelligence. Adults in literacy programs are often the victims of a school system that failed them, and union literacy programs are in keeping with the history and tradition of workers helping workers within their unions.

Literacy training in a union context, if it is based on the real needs and experiences of its members, can be a tool that starts to enable individuals to take charge of their lives. At another level, people who have a better understanding of themselves in the world can become important players in helping to change the community and its institutions for the better.

"This program does not deal with the unemployed. What about unorganized, non-union workers?

...

Contradiction perceived by many workshop participants: 1) *BEST's* orientation not blaming the victim ... not using terms like illiteracy and learner ... not blaming the school system either – just getting on with it!! and 2) *BEST's* position that the reason for literacy problems is streaming in schools for working class students.

...

The whole notion of workplace literacy seems so sensible and civilized. Very exciting and grassrootsy."

... from Participants' Response Cards

But the labour movement is also an institution. It took a vision and strong political will on the part of key learners and staff to convince the labour movement in Ontario that increased skills and participation of members who lacked a voice was a priority.

Some of the premises for *BEST* came from what we had learned from literacy movements in the developing world and from popular education groups in Canada. It had to be union-run, within a small group setting, with a participant-centred approach, with workers instructing workers and with a strong emphasis on accessibility.

Some of the other underpinnings for *BEST* come from what literacy clearly is not. Literacy is not a solution to unemployment – more jobs are. Literacy is not a solution to accidents and disease at the workplace – safe workplaces are. Literacy is not a solution to low productivity – adequate capital, appropriate technology and increased efficiency are. And literacy is not a remedy for poverty – more jobs, a higher minimum wage and adequate social assistance programs are.

Rather, the most important impact of improved literacy would be that people gain some of the skills they need to manage better in their lives, in a way that is personally rewarding to them. When this happens they may be better able to attack some of the broader problems. So it was important to design a program that was headed in that direction.

What are the key ingredients of *BEST*?

BEST is a union-run literacy and second language program of the Ontario Federation of Labour, which represents 800,000 members. We receive major funding from the Ontario Ministry of Education and our affiliated unions, and project funding from the National Literacy Secretariat. There are currently over 100 *BEST* programs being offered across Ontario in mines, paper mills, hospitals, hotels, lumber camps, universities, nursing homes, garment factories, and food processing and manufacturing plants. There are also programs for municipal workers, labourers and bus drivers. A program year runs over a thirty-six week period, for four hours a week. *BEST* offers instruction in either English or French, depending on the needs of the participants. The instructor is a co-worker and fellow union member, who is trained to work with a group of six to twelve participants. *BEST* takes place at the workplace, at least partly on work time.

***BEST* is a union-run program for union members.**

BEST is a literacy program that grows out of an existing movement for social change. This continually puts literacy in the larger perspective, as a means to an end but not an end in itself. Every aspect of *BEST* is designed to promote the collective ability of working people to shape the world in which they live; to take control of their lives; to be better able to speak with their own voices; to be able to make those voices heard; and to question, criticize, evaluate and act as full citizens in a democratic society.

At the same time, we know that our members have a very real need to improve their language and literacy skills and that we must deliver a program that responds effectively to those needs. No one is going to sign up for empowerment classes. Rather, the ways and means of doing *BEST* needs to advance literacy skills in a context of empowerment.

...

BEST **programs start with what the participants want to learn.**

BEST believes that people learn when they want to learn, particularly when they are using materials and content they see as relevant to their lives. For this reason, *BEST* has no standard text or curriculum and uses learning resources that come from the lives of the participants: their stories; their life experiences; written materials from home, the work-place and the community.

The literacy community, and increasingly the mainstream educational system, has come to embrace the *whole language* approach to reading, writing and language learning. It is generally accepted that these skills cannot be learned by dissecting the language into dangling participles and other grammar bits, but rather must be connected by meaning and expression.

I like to think that *BEST* also embraces a *whole person* approach, one that looks at the individual not only as a worker, with specific functional tasks to perform, but as a whole person. This person comes to *BEST* with a history of life experience, with skills, interests, hopes and dreams.

BEST **programs are run in small groups.**

Learning in a group of six to 12 participants makes use of the collective abilities of the group, not just the individual abilities of the instructor. Participants feel comfortable in a learning situation with their co-workers and friends where there is already a good deal in common. Groups also provide a place to develop and practise skills for discussing, questioning, listening, planning, goal setting and building mutual support.

BEST **instructors are co-workers.**

Instructors in the *BEST* program are exclusively co-workers from the same work-place and the same union. So instructors are phone operators, waiters and waitresses, hospital workers, mechanics, cooks, bus drivers and factory workers. This aspect of the *BEST* model conveys an important message: workers collectively are able to meet their own needs. Instructors are selected by their union and participate in a two week training program before starting to instruct. The instructor receives ongoing support from the *BEST* Regional Coordinator and takes part in on-going training over the course of the year. With good communication skills, respect for co-workers, a commitment to trade union education, and a healthy blend of confidence and humility, an instructor can begin from a starting point of shared experiences and backgrounds. Instructors rely on the skills of all the participants to shape and build the program. It's about the self-determination of a group, where the instructor is a peer, not a representative of power in an unequal relationship.

BEST **takes place at the workplace.**

The union negotiates for the program to be held in the workplace wherever possible. This is critically important for access and convenience, and it is familiar territory. Work is where we all spend a good deal of our waking hours, and there are many work-related language and literacy skills participants want to learn. Furthermore, for many workers, school settings still produce feeling of inadequacy, rejection and irrelevance. And while scheduling is often a major challenge, particularly in a 24 hour operation with varied and rotational shifts, it is far more likely that the need of shift-workers can be accommodated at the workplace than elsewhere.

> "Confidentiality for employees who come forward. Have they/do they suffer negative consequences as a result of declaring reading/writing problems? Union jurisdictions, skill levels of teachers are thorny issues.
>
> ...
>
> ... not trying to argue economic benefits but rather more subjective factors.
>
> ...
>
> Employer-run versus worker-run programs ... which will grow over the next decade?
>
> ...
>
> Where do we get funding for these programs if the provincial government will not participate?"
>
> **... from Participants' Response Cards**

Employers' contribution to *BEST*.

Employers have an important role to play in almost all *BEST* programs. In addition to providing the physical facilities – the meeting room and use of a photocopier and flip chart – most employers have agreed, through negotiations with the union, to provide paid time to those involved in *BEST*. Generally, employers provide 50% (two hours per week) of the participants' time. *BEST* instructors receive their time for recruitment, needs assessment, instruction and preparation. The participation of women and, more and more, men with family responsibilities is directly related to whether the classes are offered on work time.

Enlightened employers recognize that *BEST* can provide an opportunity for a win-win situation. They realize that there will be positive spinoffs for them, with increased skills and better morale within their work-force. They also recognize the benefits of a worker-run program; that workers will not be threatened by an initiative they have generated for themselves; that *BEST* and the union take all responsibility for implementing and administering the program; and that a successful program could have a positive impact on the labour relations climate in general.

...

But how do we know *BEST* is really working? At a recent follow-up training session with instructors who had been involved with *BEST* for at least several months, with some starting their second and third years, we listed some of the *Signs of BEST at Work.* Some of the observations had to do with participants' increased motivation and confidence in themselves, like "feeling proud to come to class", "coming to class on a day off", and "making more friends at work". Other signs had to do with increased skills at work and in their personal lives, like "not being afraid to speak English out loud", "being able to talk to my supervisor", "going for my driver's license (at age 55)", "going to the doctor by myself for the first time", "reading stories to my children", or "trying for (and sometimes getting) better jobs". Other participants' comments included a growing awareness of the community and the role they might play in it, like "enrolling in a night class", "becoming a volunteer", "filing a grievance" or "getting more involved in my union".

BEST is working. *BEST* has become an integral component of the Ontario labour movement's efforts to promote social and economic justice. Other regions of Canada are looking closely at the model to see what can be learned from *BEST* and applied to their own area. Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia are at varying stages of looking at or implementing their own labour literacy and second language programs.

And yet, enormous challenges remain. What happens when dozens of *BEST* instructors and most of their participants lose their jobs to plant lay-offs and shutdowns in an ever-worsening economy? How do we spread thin resources across the province and the country, especially in provinces where the prospect of government support for worker-run literacy programs is abysmal? How do we provide instructors who make a commitment of thirty-six weeks to *BEST* with the best possible training to instruct literacy in an empowering way? How do we encourage Francophone minority participants to engage in literacy training first in their own language before English which is perceived as more economically viable? How do we make it clear that the *BEST* model is not a model for employer-run workplace literacy programs because the power relationships are, by definition, unequal? But rather, that literacy programs are most likely to be successful when they are self-determined by people who share life experiences within a community or organization that links literacy with its broader purpose, such as within a native community or housing project.

Sharing ideas and experiences at a forward-looking conference like Literacy 2000 is a start. We have much to learn from each other in Canada, and Canada has much to learn from the popular movements of the developing world. If we can build on the premise that if literacy is to be truly of value it must empower those involved to see, and start to make, small changes in their lives and in the world around them; then perhaps we are on the right track.

> "There is a definite need for materials that help develop those work related, life oriented skills. Libraries tend to over-emphasize the *reading for pleasure* aspect of basic reading materials. What is really important is REAL life reading and writing skills."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

IT IS TOO SOON to release the data collected through the COFI research on literacy in B.C. sawmills, so Emily Goetz spoke in general terms about the design and process used. Significantly, interviewers never used the word "literacy" with participants. In some small communities there seems to be a stigma attached to kids whose folks attend classes. They experienced some lack of participation due to fear of being fired owing to low education.

Goetz stressed that "if we're going to make sense of literacy ... there must be more interdisciplinary communication; you have to check my assumptions and I have to check yours."

Ron Brown changed the focus of the discussion to the discrepancy between the labour process of the future and the present public debate about literacy. The basic assumptions need to be re-examined: a higher level of technology requires a higher level of skill; a higher level of skill requires a higher level of literacy; and literacy is good.

In fact, labour processes have been deskilling jobs ("transferring skills from the hands of the workers to the handbooks of managers"). Deskilling of jobs takes power and control away from the worker and gives it to managers. Even when higher levels of education are necessary to acquire new technological skills, a lower level of literacy is often required to perform the job. The skill level required to do a job cannot be equated with literacy level. Workers are interested in increasing literacy to advance out of their jobs – not to be able to do them better. New technologies do not open up new jobs for those already employed in the plant. New managers come from the outside to fill the created jobs.

A lively discussion followed. Participants seemed energized by the challenge of re-evaluating the assumptions. No conclusions could be drawn. More work must be done in many disciplines to discover a more useful perspective on literacy in the workplace than the one derived from present assumptions.

... from the Facilitator's Report

READING/WRITING ON-THE-JOB: BRITISH COLUMBIA

HAVE LITERACY REQUIREMENTS INCREASED OR DECREASED WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF COMPUTERS AND LASER SCANNERS IN INDUSTRY? WHAT JOB SPECIFIC SKILLS AND LITERACY LEVELS ARE NEEDED NOW? HEAR THE RESULTS OF A STUDY UNDERTAKEN BY THE COUNCIL OF FOREST INDUSTRIES (COFI), FOREST INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (FIR), AND THE INTERNATIONAL WOODWORKERS OF AMERICA (IWA) WHICH ASSESS THE LEVEL OF JOB COMPREHENSION SKILLS AMONG WORKERS IN TEN PROVINCIAL MILLS AND COMPARE THESE FINDINGS TO CHANGING JOB DEMANDS.

Emily Goetz

Reading/Writing on the Job: British Columbia Sawmills

Background and Introduction

Three years ago a group of us, known as Job Communications Project (JCP) Research, wrote a research proposal for the Literacy Secretariat in Ottawa. Without making any assumptions about literacy or retraining, we wanted to conduct basic exploratory research to see if there was a discrepancy between the level of written workplace materials in B.C. sawmills and the skills of employees who allegedly need to read them. We selected the forest industry in B.C. because of its size and importance.

JCP Research approached the Council of Forest Industries (COFI) and IWA-Canada for sponsorship and guidance for two reasons. JCP is a private group and therefore could not be funded directly by the National Literacy Secretariat. Also, we knew it was important to have the support of IWA-Canada and COFI to access sawmills where data would be collected.

Secretary of State, Ottawa, granted funding for the project to COFI in May, 1989. As project sponsor and administrator of funds, COFI formed a

Steering Committee of industry Vice Presidents consisting of Bert Hawyrish, COFI (Chair); Phillip Legg, IWA- Canada; Gary Johncox, MacMillan Bloedel; and Ross Stryvoke, Forest Industrial Relations (FIR). The JCP Research group and the Steering Committee began a series of meetings to set timelines, discuss logistics and process for mill access, and choose a pilot mill for testing materials and method.

The JCP Field Director's task was twofold. First, we needed a battery of tasks that could measure the fit between written materials used in B.C. sawmills and the comprehension skills of the employees who allegedly need to read them. We wanted a process that would allow us to take an employee who could not read or write through an intensive two hour interview / assessment and send him/her away feeling great about the experience. At the same time, tasks had to allow high scorers to reach their limits. Two hours per participant seemed to be a time period that mills could tolerate and one that would permit us to gather adequate information for our exploratory research questions.

Secondly, three extra interviewers in addition to Steve Sharpe and myself were needed. As Registered Psychologists in B.C., Steve and I would serve as supervising and participating interviewers. The interviewers needed that rapport-building quality which keeps interviewees feeling good no matter how they are performing. We would be dealing with a wide range of skills and language backgrounds. We needed participants to believe us when we told them the process was confidential, that results would be anonymous and in no way affect their jobs. We required accurate responses in the interviews and assessments, plus honest evaluative feedback afterward. There were two processes to design: the interview/assessment process and the process to sell the project to the mills.

The Interview/Assessment Process

JCP Research designed a set of tasks for an individual assessment of each participant. The governing principles of the assessment procedure were: confidentiality, high interest for the participant, minimal cultural bias, mix of verbal and non verbal materials.

The Warm-up

The procedure was explained, confidentiality assured, and a consent form signed and witnessed.

The Interview

There was a 10 to 20 minute oral interview consisting of 52 questions concerning: background information, language use, education and certification, communication on the job, training courses and needs.

Three assessment tests were administered: the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test – Revised* (Dunn & Dunn 1981); *Comprehension of Workplace Materials* (locally developed cloze passages based on rationale and options presented by Bowers & Bowers 1989; and *Raven's Standard Progressive Matrices* (Raven, Court & Raven 1986).

The Wind-up

Participants gave feedback and suggestions about the process.

Selling the Project to Mills & Employees

Securing the co-operation of all parties was a critical task. Lining up mills and employees for the interviews required countless hours from Steering Committee members and from Barry Bent, JCP's Site Coordinator. Unwittingly, we entered the forest industry in B.C. at a particularly sensitive time. Mills were facing cutbacks, closure and media pressure. It was difficult to find a way to assure that individual results were confidential and would not be revealed to employers at a time when jobs were perceived to be at risk. We followed a procedure suggested by the Personnel Manager in the pilot mill which was later modified to be site specific. First, the Steering Committee secured the cooperation of mill management. Second, the JCP Research group and the Steering Committee met several times at the mill with the Personnel Manager, the Plant Committee Chairman and the Supervisors. Next, the Personnel Manager published a description of the project in the mill newsletter. He explained that 50 employees, hourly and salaried, would be selected at random; and that there would be meetings in the lunchroom to explain the study, conducted by himself and by members of the Safety Committee.

Then, two members of the Safety Committee personally contacted each randomly selected employee. The selected employees were asked to attend a meeting with the JCP Research interviewers, who would answer any questions before employees agreed to participate. We met them in two groups of 25. Their questions were numerous, about confidentiality, method and results. After the meetings, 100% agreed to participate.

It is not entirely clear why there were refusals in other mills. It did seem, however, that the refusal rate was lower when invitations to selected union participants came from union members, and when selectees could meet with JCP interviewers to ask questions before interviews began. Certainly there were other variables which further analysis can hopefully clarify.

Preliminary Results

To date, we have completed interviews in the pilot mill and six of the projected ten others. Numbers presented here are from preliminary and rudimentary analysis; Pilot Mill data were not included. The final report from this study will be presented to and available from the Literacy Secretariat, Secretary of State, Ottawa, Canada.

PPVT-R Scores, N=173

30 participants scored above the 75th percentile; 71 scored below the 25th percentile.

Raven's SPM Scores, N=175

113 participants scored above the 75th percentile; 23 scored below the 25th percentile.

Cloze Passages

Passages were scored using DeSanti's scoring and interpretation system (1986). Numbers are reported in percentages and divided into three levels: Independent (can read material without assistance), Instructional (can read with assistance, Frustration (should not be asked to deal with this material).

We administered the easiest passage to 169 participants. The mean percentage for exact or Traditional Comprehension was 56.6 which is at the top of DeSanti's Instructional range. For Total Comprehension, which includes scores for synonyms, the mean percentage was 74.2, or at Independent level.

The most difficult passage was given to 91 participants. The mean percentage for Traditional Comprehension was 49, or Instructional level; the Total Comprehension mean percentage was 77, or at Independent level. This passage was written at post-university reading level.

Age

Based on an N of 179, the mean age for the sample described here was 39, with a range from 19 to 64 years.

Job Tenure

Participants (179) had spent an average of 7 years on the job, with a range between one month and 38 years.

Education

The average number of years of education completed by 176 participants was 11. The range was from 2 to 16 years.

First Language

Of the 179 interviewees, 110 spoke English as their first language. Further analysis will detail and expand the data and the relationships between them.

Comments & Conclusions

If final analysis confirms patterns suggested by these data, it may suggest that for varying reasons, the sample examined has higher reasoning abilities than formal receptive vocabulary scores. Also, anecdotal data indicate a sizable group of participants who had a series of negative and humiliating experiences in formal school, often resulting in dropping out before Grade 12. This group was unable to complete the cloze passages – they just didn't want to. It took a great deal of cajoling to gain enthusiastic participation. We were told our tasks were too much like school and that it was 'scary' for them. There seemed to be a strong theme I call *educational impotence* or feeling that formal educational options aren't possible for a variety of stated reasons.

Certainly there were participants who could not complete the cloze passages; we aren't sure this makes any difference in job performance. Employees seem to compensate. Also, alternate kinds of job literacy were not assessed, such as hand signing and physical demonstration.

Interview data show a desire for formal 'coursework', but not necessarily job-related study. Though most said they would upgrade to keep or improve their jobs, there seemed to be an expressed thirst for learning that was more on a personal level. Many commented on the mental effort required to complete our tasks, and how different it was for them to feel that way. In several mills we were called the *brainstrainers;* this was said with jocularity and usually accompanied by comments like "I never get to *use* words like this!"

We are reasonably sure that many participants, both hourly and salaried, are dissatisfied with their formal education levels.

Further analysis of our data can help explain these tentative interpretations and what educational options this verbally articulate group of sawmill employees would consider useful and/or palatable. Our hunch for now? – to avoid any assumptions that one approach could meet the needs of this varied and interesting group.

Thanks are due to my supportive partners in JCP Research, Barry Bent and Steve Sharpe; to our magical interviewers, Dolores MacDonald, Joyce Matheson and Alan Dawe; to our Steering Committee members; and to Secretary of State, Ottawa, for funding this research.

(References follow Brown's report)

Ron Brown

Literacy and Power: Technological Change and Skills in the B.C. Forest Industry

As new forms of technology propel us into the so-called 'information age', the issue of illiteracy is taking on the appearance of a crisis. An interesting feature of the way this crisis is perceived is the discrepancy between the work being carried out by people in the field on the one hand and the public debates concerning illiteracy on the other. Even a brief survey of the literature concerning adult literacy reveals a diversity of views on such basic questions as the definition and measurement of literacy, research directions, and remedial strategies.

In contrast, the parameters of the public or political discussion seem limited to one particular model. The low level of reading and writing skills of a large number of people in our society is seen as a threat to 'our competitive position' in the world economy. It is from this understanding of the problem that the concept of *functional illiteracy* seems to have been derived (Levine 1987, 250) and from which the problems associated with illiteracy are reduced to the financial losses attributed to inadequate training, high accident rates, and low productivity.

This version of Human Capital Theory can be questioned on a number of grounds. As David Noble's study of the U.S. steel industry has shown, the technological determinism which informs this approach only serves to mystify the actual social processes at work (Noble 1984, 18). Similar questions can be raised as to how this theory is related to such ethical and political values as egalitarianism and democracy.

As well as avoiding any recognition of these larger issues, the public discussion of literacy is characterized by some questionable assumptions about the specific effects of technological change on the labour process. The argument can be found in various magazines, newspapers, and organizational reports but the statement of the Economic Council of Canada is as clear as any:

> Organizations must continually adapt to a complex and constantly changing environment; ... and individuals must learn new skills and adapt themselves to the group and the organization. The key elements are, therefore, the flexibility and adaptability that come from continuous learning (1987, 92).

While leaving open the question of how to implement a program of continuous learning, the argument takes for granted, first of all, that higher levels of technology require a more highly skilled workforce. Related to this assumption is the widely shared view that these new skills can be equated to, or at least will require, higher levels of literacy. Finally, the argument implies that these higher levels of literacy in themselves empower the individual and enrich social life in general. The objective of this brief presentation is to show how the premises of the discussions being carried out in the public and political arenas are open to criticism. Some insights provided by debates in social science and around *deskilling*, together with examples from the forest industry in B.C., can illustrate the dangers of an approach which subordinates literacy to the needs of industry. One of the most widely held beliefs about our 'post-industrial' society is that the workers of the future will be highly skilled, knowledgeable, and competent. The Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy confidently predicts:

> The new technologies are having an impact on the types of skills people require. Almost all industries are introducing computer based technologies which require a level of comprehension and ability over and above previous requirements (1988, 11).

While more complex levels of technology will obviously require workers who are capable of designing, installing, and maintaining the new equipment, the effects on the working class as a whole are far from obvious. In contrast to the rosy picture presented by business and government organizations is the well-known Braverman Thesis concerning the 'degradation' of work in capitalist society (Braverman 1984). Braverman maintains that an integral part of the capitalist labour process is the con-tinual deskilling of the labour force. He points to 'Taylorism' or scientific management as the logical development of that process whereby production is broken down into a series of simple tasks which separate the conception of these tasks from their execution. Thus, the worker is stripped of all knowledge of or participation in the process as a whole and is relegated to the endless repetition of these simplified tasks. The re-assembly of skills or knowledge of the whole product is carried out at the level of management in the form of instructions. Seen from this view, the labour process represents the "transfer of skills from the hands of workers to the handbooks of management" (Noble 1984, 33).

A brief look at the latest technology of the forest industry in B.C. tends to confirm this view. The introduction of laser scanners and computer based information systems is overcoming some of the previous limitations imposed by the irregular nature of wood products. The changes involved in one of the jobs most pivotal to any sawmill, the operation the headsaw, can illustrate this point.

Traditionally, the sawyers who run the headsaw have been considered amongst the most highly skilled individuals in the industry. Since every log is different in regard to size, shape, species and quality, and can be utilized in an infinite variety of ways, the sawyer had to combine a thorough knowledge of the various qualities of the log with an understanding of what cuts were required to fill particular product orders. These mental calculations were carried out with a high degree of manual coordination in loading, unloading and turning the log while at the same time passing the log through the saw and disposing of the cut pieces.

Laser scanners now 'read' the size and length of the logs which have been pre-sorted as to quality, species, and so on. This information is fed into the computer which is programmed to co-ordinate these characteristics with the type of orders to be filled. The computer sets the log for each cut, telling the sawyer when to turn the log and what type of cut to make. The sawyer's job, then, has become one of largely operating the manual controls which move the log.

This example of changes to the operation of the headsaw provides a classic example of *deskilling*. The traditional knowledge of the product and the process of production, originally found in the individual worker, is now to be found in the programme of the computer. The same transformation has taken place in other jobs, to the degree that the new technology has been applied to them.

The counter-argument to the deskilling thesis is that the same process which eliminates the need for some skills creates a need for new types of skills. The assertion that skills of literacy and numeracy replace those informal or traditional skills which have been lost can be seen as the second assumption in the public debate. The *Workforce 2000* study predicts that more than one-half of the jobs created in the next decade will require more than high school education. There is a surprising lack of hard evidence to support this contention and there is no reason to simply assume its validity. In fact, there are good reasons to doubt it. Noble's comprehensive study of the U.S. steel and machine tool industry, for example, shows that the driving force behind the automation of that industry was the *necessity*, as perceived by employers, to overcome the dependence on skilled labour. As one designer indicated, the whole purpose of the automation process is to design a "machine for idiots" (Noble 1984, 44).

Some evidence that this is at least the result of the new forest industry technology is indicated by the training period required for sawyers. Whereas, in the past, sawyers were trained over a long period of time – up to a year – and usually were individuals who had held closely related jobs, the training period now requires only a few weeks and there is less need for related experience.

To be sure, there are now some very basic literacy requirements for the job in that the operator must be able to 'read' the computer monitor. However, most of this 'reading' consists of repetitive one word instructions and interpreting a series of picture graphs into manual operations. One installer of the computer driven machinery at the log cut-off saw observed that "even a moron could run this machine". The *new literacy* proponents might argue that the higher levels of literacy will not be found in the jobs being transformed but in the creation of new types of jobs. However, the tremendous increase in the amount of information being produced and processed has not meant an increase in clerical or *mental* jobs. The ever increasing capacity of computers to handle the information has meant an intensification of work for the individual worker rather than an increase in the number of workers.

Production workers affected directly by the new technology, as already noted, require very low levels of literacy to translate the instructions from the computer into mechanical operations. There have been some changes to the existing trades jobs but not nearly as much as might be expected. Some of the millwrights, for example, have had to acquire additional training to maintain the sophisticated hydraulic systems allied to the computerized technology. Most of the new skilled jobs – the assembly, installation and even maintenance of the computer systems – have been created outside the plant. Even anything beyond the simplest programming is performed by outside contractors with the specialized knowledge required.

The one area in which there has been a dramatic increase in the number of jobs is that of *coordination*. The number of supervisory personnel has increased dramatically at all levels. Whereas the sawmill/planer complex used to run with one shift supervisor and an overall manager, there are now first line supervisors in each section of the mill – sawmill, planer, log yard, fibre, maintenance – as well as whole new layers of management such as superintendents and general supervisors as well as personnel, production and general managers.

This increase of supervisory personnel is related to the final assumption present in the literacy debate. What is at stake here is the notion of literacy as a means of empowering the individual, social groups and society in general. A powerful tradition within our culture is the faith in Reason and Enlightenment as a guide to progress, but how this actually takes place, of course, is a matter of contention. Most visionaries of the new technology remain quite vague about the distribution of benefits derived from advances in knowledge in the form of advanced technology.

There is certainly enough evidence to at least question this optimistic view of the relationship between knowledge and power. As one literacy commentator has pointed out, the rise of National Socialism took place in a relatively literate society and Hitler even wrote a book (Gold 1979, 42). The work of Michel Foucault (1980) illustrates the intimate relation between knowledge and power in every society (Foucault 1980). To evaluate whether literacy is empowering from such a perspective is to determine pre-cisely who is being empowered and for what purposes.

Literacy, like any other skill, does not take place in a vacuum. It is pointless to talk about literacy, particularly *functional* literacy without discussing the economic and political context. This means, for one thing, that the goals of literacy must be seen in the light of an overall industrial strategy. Does talking about high tech needs and skills in Canada make any sense within the framework of our resource based economy (Luke 1988, 199)? This issue will become increasingly relevant in light of the numerous predictions concerning the deindustrializing effects of the Free Trade Agreement.

But, power is also embedded in the labour process itself. An important source of workers' power is the ability to use their skill in exercising some degree of control over production. As Noble's study shows, the desire of employers to limit this control is often as important as economic feasibility in the development of automated equipment (Noble 1984, 266).

The changes in sawmill technology lend credence to this perception. To being with, as mentioned earlier, many of the decision making processes have been transformed into instructions. The sawyer or the log cut-off saw operator no longer perform manual operations according to a skilled evaluation but carry out these operations on the basis of decisions made by management through the computer programme. Other, more overt forms of increased management control are also permitted by the introduction of computer technology. The vast amount of instantaneously accessible information allows for a much closer monitoring of the production process. By pressing a button, a supervisor can find out how many lines or cuts a sawyer has made at any given time as well as the types of cuts, the number of logs used and the exact amount of footage produced. The computer also permits a much tighter scrutiny of time in that any amount of time the machine is not working is recorded and printed out at the end of each shift. Finally, the new systems give the different levels of management direct access to production information. The general manager, for instance, can tap in through the central computer to get a first hand look at the performance of the different parts of the operation. In these instances, the increase in knowledge, either in literacy skills or advanced technology do not tend to empower the individuals concerned but serve to reinforce the existing division of power.

This is the issue which should be at the centre of the discussions of literacy – how reading and writing can give people more power over their lives. Capitalism, on a world scale, is undergoing a tremendous re-organization, with resultant changes to all levels of society. Dorothy Smith refers to the workplace as being *textually mediated* in the sense that the power of management in the labour process is increasingly reliant on the interpretation of texts (Smith n.d., 2). However, the level and type of literacy being introduced does not necessarily lead to richer lives in the spirit of the UNESCO resolution:

> ...that the wide diffusion of culture and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern (1965, 5).

This objective should be the focus of the public debates surrounding literacy. If the needs of people, in the form of particular skills, are subordinated to the needs of industry, the UNESCO resolution may end up being just so much rhetoric. On the other hand, if the genuine needs and aspirations of people are the driving force of literacy programmes including those based in the workplace, reading and writing skills can, in the words of Paulo Friere, enable people to ultimately participate in society's historical process".

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"The outcome of the study – is this really what we wanted the forest industry to hear? (ie no need for upgrading?)

...

Much interest was expressed in the idea that job skills and literacy may be two different things.

...

I found the idea that literacy would no longer be required due to de-skilling to be unbelievable – the focus on mills was too narrow.

...

This area has such a multiplicity of definitions of literacy, that some seemingly disparate opinions may well have been resolved had a common definition been established.

...

Why is the literacy debate not political? Why are we not challenging the way in which literacy is being discussed?

...

Interesting that literacy does not necessarily 'empower' as has often been suggested.

...

Introduction of computers and technology does not necessarily mean higher levels of literacy are needed.

...

Need a whole re-thinking of whose agenda is literacy? There must be a re-thinking of our national campaign. Literacy is not necessarily connected to employment."

... from Participants' Response Cards

PHARNESS DESCRIBED THE EVOLVING MODEL of his learner-centred program. The Vancouver City Hall Language Program by the city's Equal Employment Opportunity Office responds to the language barriers faced by city employees. Classes take place in five different city workplace sites. To date there have been approximately 70 participants in the program.

Enrolment in the program is voluntary for three month sessions, after which an employee may re-enrol. The program is open to any employee. No formal measurement is conducted; assessment occurs informally and continuously through personal interviews and review of the students' writing portfolios. The confidentiality of the employees is strictly maintained.

At present most of the participants in the program use English as a second language, reflecting the large number of immigrants making up the city workforce. Pharness does not distinguish his methodology between English as a second language and native English-speaking students except that with ESL he emphasizes class discussion to develop facility in spoken English.There are no prescribed texts or curriculum for the classes; the participants themselves define their language needs. Reading materials are supplied by the students (and often are texts pertaining to their work) or, when supplied by Pharness, are always "authentic" reading tasks (e.g., the students' own writings, union documents, and other such "whole language" materials.)

Of particular interest to the workshop participants was Pharness's concept of "clusters of allies" – using the actual affiliations between individuals in the workplace rather than the usual employer-worker-union channels for organization and recruitment.

... from the Facilitator's Report

VANCOUVER CITY HALL PROJECT: BRITISH COLUMBIA

CAN WHAT LEARNERS WANT BECOME THE BASIS FOR PROGRAM PLANNING WITHOUT LOSING THE ENDORSEMENT OF EMPLOYERS AND TRADE UNIONS? INVESTIGATE A WIDE-RANGING APPROACH TO NEEDS ASSESSMENT WHICH LEADS TO LEARNER-CENTRED WORKPLACE PROGRAMS.

Gary Pharness

The following briefly describes how one worker language program evolved and developed through on-site assessment in the City of Vancouver.

Selected literature on the rationale for participatory program planning shows that: (1) more accurate information and better decisions will be made if client feedback is involved, and (2) as a result of involvement, clients will share in the ownership of their learning, and by extension, the project.

In their studies, Comstock and Fox (1982) concluded that learners' participatory experiences initiated sustained personal growth.

Personal testimonies of many experienceadult educators (Kidd 1959; Knox 1977; Knowles 1980) consistently advocate the importance of student feedback in adult learning. However, practitioners most often plan their educational programs with other instructors or administrators (Fox,1981).

As presented here, learners can be seen to be the designers of their own literacy. These learning designs begin with the initial interview ,"... a process geared to the uncovering... through natural language, of how people feel, what they know, and what their concerns, beliefs, perceptions and understandings are" (Wolf & Tymitz, 1976-77, 6). This passage shows the importance of placing learners at the centre of their learning, and strengthens the proposition that learning designed and implemented without learner participation invites failure.

Some managerial and union language concerns came about during initial interviews held in early December, 1989. After these meetings, the following language issues in the City workplace came into focus.

Employee needs addressed by the City workplace language programs are:

1. Low-entry staff – employees having reading, writing and pronunciation difficulties which interfere in their moving from the entry level to a more challenging staff position or impair general communication processes.
2. Oral language needs – the talents and skills of these staff not being fully realized because of their specific oral language problems.
3. Language of socialization – immigrant and long-term workers with ESL backgrounds expressing feelings of alienation, isolation and over-all loneliness in the context of work relationships, attributable to English language deficits.
4. Sophisticated oral and written expression – the desire by managers and supervisors to achieve higher level oral and written expression for utilization especially within the work environment.

Access to prospective participants was, for the most part, through managers and immediate supervisors. This allowed for reasonably easy access to the possible candidates. However, the follow-up interviews with employees posed some specific problems, for example, "how'd you get my name?" "what about my work?" and "who else from our department is doing this?". These were valid questions from some who found being interviewed a threatening imposition.

The personal interview is an ongoing feature of this program. It is a tool which provides learners the opportunity to continually reassess their learning.

As pointed out by Guba and Lincoln (1981), "... the interview is an indispensable tool for identifying concerns and issues ... it is only through the interview that the investigator can fully explore an audience's perspective ..."(1981, 331). Payne (1951) cites the technical advantages of the unstructured interview: elicits a wide range of responses, solicits suggestions, provides respondents the opportunity to have their own say, helps to discover information, and offers maximum flexibility for movement in different directions.

Along with the personal interview, observation and document analysis serve to more fully inform. Throughout this program, observation is primarily used in two ways. First, it helps the observer gain a sense of the work environment and can be 'looked over' by managers, supervisors and prospective participants. Second, references to situations that require further clarification can possibly be informally observed while in the environment.

Document analysis occurs when reference is made during interviews to specific written materials used in the workplace. On more than one occasion documents were brought out during the interview. These materials facilitate external auditing and also serve as evaluative tools in that properly prepared documents represent desired work outcomes, whereas improperly attempted documents reveal literacy needs.

December 4 - 15, 1989

Disscussion of possible employee literacy needs. Managers contacted individually during these two weeks. Worker literacy needs were discussed in more detail, and, in some instances, specific literacy problems were defined.

December 18 - 22, 1989

Contacted managers and supervisors and found that many of them needed more time for consideration. One employee who had completed an earlier literacy program suggested a number of things to avoid when interviewing prospective candidates. Her suggestions confirmed our own practices. She suggested that the phrases *poor English*, *a misunderstanding*, and *poor communication* be avoided. Also, she spoke of how the phrase *want you to perform better* leaves an ESL person feeling ashamed. Her alternative was to have courses designed for ESL employees which enable them to prepare themselves for advancement and promotion, and upgrade English standards; all positive ways of presenting literacy. At a meeting on December 20th the managers of non-revenue buildings thoughtfully allowed me to present and answer questions and adopted the notion of literacy as everyone's right.

January 1 - 15, 1990

Interviews conducted. Outlines of some of the interviews are presented here.

Participant #1: ESL background; seen as an industrious worker by peers and supervisor at City

> "How to balance all the needs of learners, union, and management? How to get everyone's hidden agenda out into consideration?
>
> ...
>
> It is time for educators to re-read (or perhaps read for the first time) teaching as a subversive activity.
>
> ...
>
> Fascinating idea – creating clusters of allies, analyzing the 'minefield'."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

Clerks Department which is a language-sensitive work site. Problem identification: listening and typing problems arising from dictaphone; phone and desk contact with public requiring interactive communication.

Participant #2: works at library; Cantonese language background; speaks English only in the workplace; feels isolated from peers because of language barriers. Obtaining of pronunciation, reading and writing skills are important to client. Problem identification: pronunciation in the workplace. Material orientation: interactive communication practice; personal and workplace writing as bases for reading text and vocabulary development.

Participant #3: works at library. This person, at first, was nervous, but once the interview got under way, he relaxed and discussed some very revealing feelings and concerns. Like most interviewees, he offered much more information than needed and, like most prospective participants, once having settled into the interview candidly expressed how language barriers prevented his full participation in the workplace. Problem identification: reading and writing workplace documents; conversation interaction; and vocabulary development. Material orientation: document analysis; reading for meaning and discussion; practice using active listening to effect self-correction.

Participant #6: met with this participant two times previously so at the interview, he was able to get quickly to the point. He wants to be better prepared with his language skill for meetings, and he sees his writing as "babyish". *Very intense desire,* as a descriptive phrase, is an understatement about this participant. He is willing to work well beyond the six hours if necessary. At present he is a manager. Problem identification: speaking and writing. Materials orientation: document analysis of past written work; rewriting such documents to achieve a more sophisticated writing style; creating higher level language structures to enable more fluent participation at meetings.

Participant #7: recently been promoted to a position requiring more and better written and verbal skills. The participant was observed receiving three incoming calls. In all cases, his speech was heavily accented (self-described) and oral responses ranged from one or two word answers to convolutedly constructed questions. He feels that he spends too much time translating from home language to English. Also, he says he has received numerous complaints from the public. At first, he experienced difficulty formulating questions. Later, he added that he needed help in putting answers into English structures. In a very wonderful way he expressed his dilemma, "The words come to my lips, and there they freeze. I want to melt them." How to write work orders, memos and short reports are other pressing literacy needs for this employee. Problem identification: oral and written expression. Materials orientation: communicative interaction – phone, person to person, small groups; analysis of workplace documents; replication of workplace materials; language structure practice.

Participant #8: has been in Canada for five years and has worked for the City for four years. Formerly a grade K teacher for 14 years prior to moving to Canada, she now works in a laundry. I looked at two novels which she had been trying to read. One was by Rex Stout. She felt her reading skills were wholly inadequate. In looking at her reports, I noted that sentence structures were good, however, some lacked verbs and/or modifiers. Paragraph construction was a problem area. Problem identification: reading, writing and conversation. Materials orientation: workplace document analysis; communicative interaction; higher level sentence and paragraph structures; personal writing to build vocabulary and gain reading skills.

Participant #9: has been in Canada a number of years. He attended a technical school where instruction took place in English. Although he is quite knowledgeable about work, his subordinates view him as someone who knows very little. This is because in his speech he uses words, expressions and structures which tend to sound meaningless. At my arrival at the work site, the participant questioned me extensively about how I had gotten his name. I told him. He seemed satisfied with my response. He wanted to know who I worked for and how much I was being paid. I told him. Again, the response seemed to please him. Then a fairly uncivilized incident developed. Another worker came into the room, walked over to the participant's desk, shoved a paper directly into his face and said, "What does this mean? Doesn't look like it means anything. Can't you do it right?" The participant calmly tried to show the other worker why he had put the purchase order together in such a way. At this point, the other worker finished his attack on the participant with, "Only a moron would do work like that." With the arrival of the senior supervisor, order was restored to the workplace. The supervisor verified the language problems identified by the worker. He whole heartedly supported the worker, and wanted to know what he could do to help him. I must add here, that I couldn't understand his speech although he was a native-born English speaker. Problem identification: oral language and pronunciation practice. Material orientation: discourse analysis; personal writing as a basis to understanding ideogrammatic and slang expression; to see meaning through structural analysis of written work.

I will include here a summary of a series of meetings between a department supervisor and myself which illustrate the difficulties that can be encountered in assessing and rectifying workplace language problems. The department supervisor explained a problem with two professionally trained senior staff members who demonstrated language deficiencies in the workplace.

One used language abruptly and abrasively, consequently alienating her own clients. Her problem seemed to stem from an inadequate language base which caused her to act defensively. However, unknowing clients viewed her defensiveness as brusqueness, culminating in the feeling that the worker didn't truly give a damn about them. The other senior staff member, though viewed as possibly the most knowledgeable in his field, spoke and thought with such rapidity as to leave listeners confused and possibly disoriented. Here his accent got in the way of communication.

The supervisor felt he faced a true dilemma. He was at a loss as to how he should approach these two staff members about a problem which had not been attended to for so long. The supervisor's plan to change this situation was to name

"What do we do when the employer is not as benign and friendly to the idea of learner-based programs?

...

...encouraging personal writing even in a workplace program and trusting that growing language skills will eventually include all kinds of communication needs including workplace skills.

...

... confidence in a learner-centred approach."

... from Participants' Response Cards

the quick-speaking staff member as the abrasive staff member's supervisor. It was hoped that, working together, these two would come to see the language problems they held between them. This did not work out and in the end the supervisor approached his language-defensive, abrasive staff member as tactfully as possible about our program. He explained that it was voluntary and designed to meet employees' needs. She flatly refused and wouldn't give a minute of her time, even for her own laguage improvement. The supervisor said that this is her usual reaction. At this time the supervisor decided not to approach the other senior staff member. However, he did decide to approach a third senior staff member concerning our program. The result was disastrous. She did not want to be in a class with first and second year immigrants. She felt hurt. Given the fact that the supervisor now has two upset staff members, the decision is to wait and try another approach in the very near future.

There are several tools available to help to allay employees' fears of being involved in a workplace language program. For instance, to avoid the fear that tests hold for learners we can establish a few rules which make them feel safer. We can begin to set up boundaries, which show where learners' rights begin and where the rights of all others participating in the learning environment end. These boundaries are flexible and can bend to accommodate change in our relationship with learners. The object is to be open to change without letting administrative and/or union needs violate the inviolate needs of learners.

...

Participant #10: is someone for whom the language program has special meaning. He is Caucasian, Canadian born, who was sent to China at age nine with his adoptive mother. He returned to Canada eleven years ago at age 41. English was no longer his first language. He speaks four Chinese dialects, reads and writes Mandarin well, and practices acupuncture; this in spite of being allowed only the most menial and laborious of jobs on collective farms and in rock quarries. He presented himself as an eager man who was very much wanting to learn.

His supervisor had intimated to me that there was something peculiar about Joe; however, she could not put her finger on it. He read English passably well, but he wrote much less fluently. He seemed to require conversation and took on an extraordinary aliveness when conversing. He found all subjects interesting and especially liked talking about the world of politics and the cruelty people are wont to inflict on one another.

Late one afternoon, after being in the program for two weeks, he and I left the committee room across from the Mayor's office. Although we had been talking about barracks living on collective farms deep in China, while waiting for the elevator I was struck by his composure in such surroundings. He seemed as warm to life as the autumn sun which was at that moment settling onto the edge of the world.

We stepped outside and stood on the steps talking. We talked well past the locking of the doors after the workers had left for home. Suddenly, I understood why he was hesitant to quit – to leave English until another time. Unlike the setting sun emptying the world of its light, in speaking English, he was filling his mind and being with the light of language.

Then, leaning toward me, he put his hand on my arm and said, "Gary, I can read the newspaper, I can learn to say machine (a word he had only recently pronounced as 'missing') and also I know to say please and thank you and hello. At work, every day it is the same – 'hello, how are you, fine' – and every once in a while someone comments on how they went to Eatons or to a football game." He quit talking momentarily. Finally he said, "Gary, only since I've come to this language program, have I had the opportunity to talk since coming back to Canada – to really talk."

> "Articulated my frustration with a course I'm teaching where we have students write journals and work on formulaic paragraphs. Journals are not corrected. Paragraphs have to be in a perfect form. Journals have interesting content and paragraphs are boring."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

LUCY BONNERJEA'S WORKSHOP outlined the objectives, assessment techniques, negotiating strategies, course designs, schedules and evaluation procedures of the Workbase program. At the core of the politics of the Workbase program is the idea of meeting the employers' objectives and at the same time satisfying the needs of the workers. To this end they have developed cooperative strategies for working with employers, employees, unions and educational bodies.

As the principles and practises of Workbase were delineated, questions surfaced. Do skills-based programs adequately address literacy needs? Is literacy being narrowed by responding to job-related literacy needs?

Workbase programs are not an alternative to the broader educational mandate of community or college programs, but rather are seen as the only way to start to change the workplace and achieve social justice. This leads to certain compromises. Something being taught is better than nothing. Given the 'hidden agenda' of Workbase, how is trust maintained with employers? Do employers know?

The session opened many questions. Participants suggested that the issues of what type of programs belong in the workplace and what role educators should play in these programs deserved considerable further exploration.

... from the Facilitator's Report

WORKBASE: LONDON, ENGLAND

Lucy Bonnerjea

HOW CAN LITERACY PROGRAMS HELP MANUAL WORKERS TACKLE THE ISSUES WHICH AFFECT THEM? FIND OUT HOW EMPLOYER-FUNDED *WORKBASE*, AN INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION WHICH HAS WORKED WITH TRADE UNIONS AND INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT TO PROVIDE LITERACY TRAINING FOR MANUAL WORKERS SINCE 1978, VIEWS WORKERS' EDUCATION.

Literacy is not all about developing the imagination. It is not purely about self-expression in inter-personal terms, not limited to the development of a sense of poetry or writing about feelings. It may be all of these things, and these may all be very worthwhile, but it can also be about something different.

The something different is about work. Workplace literacy is about working, communicating, self-skilling; and sometimes it is also about challenging, choosing, asserting, demanding, negotiating. It is about engaging with workplace practices to give workers a greater voice. It is about demystifying structures, to make the whole of an organization more accessible to its least skilled workers. It is about teaching communicating skills so that managers can listen more and workers can talk more.

These are ideals – and perhaps not always realizable. Yes there is workplace literacy that is narrow, that teaches the basic minimum for workers to improve their work. It is designed around improved productivity and it aims to benefit employers. It tries to make money: it tries to save money. At times it squeezes overworked and underpaid workers even more than before – to extract better *value for money* from them, to make them more competitive, to increase profits. It gives workplace literacy a bad name.

"...the conflict between the practical of today or tomorrow and the notion of learning needing to be an open-ended, learner-centred process. The important point was to be an agent for change.

...

I was impressed by the amount of preparation that seems to go into Workbase's dealings with management. This preparation seems to enable Workbase to achieve many positive things for workers without management questioning the group once the courses have started.

...

Who owns workplace literacy?

...

How do we stretch workplace literacy to broader education needs?"

... from Participants' Response Cards

It keeps good teachers away from the workplace and contributes to the division between education which is 'good' and training at work which is 'bad'. Education is regarded as broad, student-centred, expansive and creative; narrow workplace literacy is none of these. It is seen as narrow, employer-centred, productivity-centred and deadening.

So, why get involved in workplace literacy anyway? Why not avoid it and keep to the security of the classroom or the community hall? Three reasons. First, economic trends. The world is becoming rapidly interdependent, with what were previously rich countries now exporting the source of their richness, relying on their manufacturing sectors and importing for much of their needs. These countries are becoming the expensive countries rather than the rich ones. The reduction of labour costs becomes a key aim of all businesses, and manual work is disappearing. For Canada the biggest development in this direction is Free Trade. Introduced already with the U.S. and soon with Mexico, it is a major threat to all less skilled workers with literacy needs. The less skilled workers' jobs will disappear.

This is more urgent than often recognized. The work of the current manual workforce of Canada, whether or not it consists of immigrants or other low paid workers, is under threat of extinction. If Mexican workers are willing to work for three dollars a day, why keep a factory running in Canada? Unskilled workers will need to become skilled workers to stay in employment; they will need to learn a great many skills in a very short time, and literacy will be the first and facilitating one.

The second reason is technology. This argument has been around for a long time, and there is some truth in the counter-argument that the doom and gloom predictions made ten or fifteen years ago have not taken place. But the issue remains a serious one. The level of technology operating in any workplace is now very high. It requires people to be skilled in using machinery, keeping to health and safety regulations, recognizing and preventing technological breakdowns, and so on. Literacy is increasingly a pre-requisite for even the most menial job. And the absence of literacy and numeracy skills is a very good predictor of job losses, de-skilling, long periods of unemployment and a career of earning progressively less throughout one's work life. One example of an industry that is substituting machinery and technology for many of its less skilled workers is the logging industry. Job losses are phenomenal and the social consequences in some parts of the country are devastating.

The third reason is the debate around the nature of work itself. For some people brought up in the arts and humanities, the world of work outside this is at best narrow and restricted, at worst oppressive and evil. There is now internationally a debate about 'what is work', about whether concepts such as *full time* work are meaningful, whether greater flexibility can be introduced, whether the more traditional divisions between workers and managers, and between workers and shareholders, can be reduced, whether work can be given meaning again as something other than a source of income.

These debates are important, and they are most important for those who have been furthest away from them, in the least skilled jobs. Yet the professionals who are loading the debate and the negotiations know little about the people who could benefit most. They know little about the obstacles to greater satisfaction, greater participation, and greater promotion opportunities in the unskilled sectors.

So these are some of the reasons for transferring some of literacy teaching from the classroom or the community hall to the workplace. This is not what everyone wants to do or should do – but it is important for some people to do it, to reach those whose lack of literacy, numeracy or communications skills make them especially vulnerable.

So what makes a good workplace literacy scheme? I would argue there are three ingredients: listening skills, negotiating skills and facilitating skills. First, listening skills: workplace literacy teachers need to develop a special workplace literacy themselves, which consists of developing the skills to understand the politics at the workplace. It means listening and watching for the many unspoken barriers to communication in the workplace. It means analyzing these barriers in terms of elements that can be turned around, barriers that can be pulled down and made into opportunities.

When literacy teachers start work in a workplace, they often suffer from a kind of illiteracy themselves. It is easy to stumble around not knowing what questions to ask, who to ask, how to interpret, how to communicate. We may want to collect workplace material to enable factory operators to communicate better, to take more control over thei work, to identify the problems in the workplace that keep them working in dull jobs without a sense of job satisfaction. But how do we do it?

Literacy teachers' own literacy develops slowly, with experience. It is based on initial listening skills – learning from those who do not have the formal skills that are required in so many places, but who have the informal survival skills which seem to count for solittle. Listening is about valuing those skills, working with those skills.

Then there is negotiating. That is about translating the needs of workers – not just for education, but for access to respect, to a career, to progress, to reward, into demands for practical, implementable changes. This might mean starting with the development of training opportunities and moving towards making recommendations on career opportunities – not new to professionals but often a heretic suggestion when applied to unskilled workers in many workplaces.

And lastly, there are facilitating skills. Teaching is the wrong word most of the time; since the experience is there, it is only the words and the methods for using them that need to be added. Maybe it is teaching of a sort, but it starts with the workers' own experiences, needs and aspirations and moves towards articulating these and acting on them.

I have tried to argue there are good reasons for taking the need for workplace literacy seriously and for recognising the needs of the least skilled workers in Canada. I have also tried to give some suggestions as to how to approach a good workplace literacy scheme. Shying away from workplace literacy as a principle is as irresponsible as promoting the narrow type of functional literacy that fits people more effectively into dead-end jobs. Both attitudes lack imagination, lack an understanding of the politics of literacy and its new dimension for the year 2000. Workplace literacy needs to be about the economics of the oppressed. It is about increasing the economic bargaining power of those who carry the label illiterate or unskilled. And it is also about developing the imagination of the workplace.

> "We must work more closely with unions to distinguish the responsibilities of unions in educating workers and the role of the literacy educator.
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> ...
>
> How can a program which requires so much thorough organizing ever be funded, become cost effective, or even cost reasonable?
>
> ...
>
> The issue of our workplace programs simply meeting the needs of the workplace or do they acknowledge that work is only a part of someone's situation? The issues to be dealt with by the worker may have little to do with the workplace but have more to do with life outside the workplace."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

TRAINING INSTRUCTORS: EXPERIENCE & ACCREDITATION

INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION SCHEME: ENGLAND & WALES

Judith Banbury

Assistant Director, Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, England and Wales
Responsible for staff development training, Yorkshire

LEGITIMIZING PRACTITIONERS' SKILLS AND WORTH

Serge Wagner

Founder and director, University of Quebec certification program in adult education
Initiator of literacy programming in Quebec and French Ontario
International educator, writer and researcher
Author, UNESCO's 1990 report on literacy in Canada

MOVING ON: FROM LEARNER TO TEACHER

Elsa Auerbach

Ex-assembler, auto and electronics industries
Assistant professor, University of Massachusetts, Boston
ESL adult literacy teacher in community-based, workplace and community college programs
Coordinator, University of Massachusetts Family Literacy Project
Initiator of community and university literacy teaching education project

BANBURY OUTLINED THE FUNCTIONS of ALBSU (Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit). ALBSU has an annual budget of three million pounds from government sources but will soon become an independent charitable body. Literacy is not a partisan issue in Britain and there is now recognition that literacy provision needs to be a continuing service – not just a "mopping-up" operation as many first envisaged it. ALBSU's aim was to set up a training situation where coherence, credibility and "something for everyone" could all be combined in an accreditation scheme.

There are some possible faults, dangers and lessons learned. Accreditation begets accreditation; the Certificate is subject to upward mobility resulting in a 'degree' type course. Certificates may become barriers to entry in the field. There was little student/learner involvement in the drawing up of the certificate content/competencies. Some people taking the courses 'serve time' but do not change their way of doing things; constant assessment is required. There is some confusion between the names of the two certificates as they are so similar and the 'Certificate' was actually available ahead of the 'Initial Certificate'.

The program raises several issues: the charging of training fees for volunteers or low-paid tutors working a few hours a week; the role of volunteers in teaching literacy i.e. suitability, accountability, etc.; the question of who determines the competencies; and the lack of learner input into design of training programs. Is certification needed in Canada? If so, which level(s) of government will direct it? How will it affect more remote areas and community-based groups?

Several aspects of the program were attractive: a nationally-recognized accreditation scheme; accreditation of prior experience; the competency-based approach; use of mentors; building a personal portfolio of experience/work; and recognition of each certificate level towards further qualifications. Accreditation schemes are being developed in Canada, one in Ontario and one at Fairview College, Alberta.

... from the Facilitator's Report

INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION SCHEME: ENGLAND AND WALES

SHOULD CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS BE ESTABLISHED FOR ABE AND ESL INSTRUCTORS? HOW WILL PROVEN EXPERTISE BE RECOGNIZED ONCE CERTIFICATION IS INTRODUCED? LEARN WHY THE ADULT LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS UNIT, THE CENTRAL SECRETARIAT FOR LITERACY IN ENGLAND AND WALES, DEVELOPED ITS ACCREDITATION STRATEGY IN 1984-85, WHAT QUALIFICATIONS ARE CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL, AND HOW THEIR FRAMEWORK FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED ON NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS.

Judith Banbury

The following is an account of the current picture of staff development and training in England and Wales and its attempts to provide some background and a context for the developments which have taken place in the last five years.

ALBSU (the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit) is the central focus for adult literacy and basic skills work in England and Wales and is funded by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office Education Department.

The Unit's initiatives in staff development and training have been under development since 1986. The significance of this date is that it was from that year onwards that the Unit was granted a more permanent status by its major funding bodies. Previously the Unit, in its various forms and under its various titles, had received short-term funding for between one and three years at a time. This had been the position since the first central Unit had been established in 1975.

The new status enabled the Unit to plan more effectively in the longer term and to take into account the long-term training needs of the field. The current programmes, now more fully developed, were the result of an extensive series of pilots and research into good practice in existence. There was also a considerable amount of consultation with key organizations and individuals.

The position in 1985 was that there was little accredited training for staff in adult literacy. The only course available which was nationally recognized was the R.S.A. Diploma in Teaching and Learning in Adult Basic Education and this was only available in a few areas of England and Wales. The Diploma was at the time seen as a postgraduate course and conceived at a fairly advanced level in terms of academic endeavour. In spite of this, the Diploma was sometimes used (in the absence of alternatives) as a form of accreditation for staff at all levels of experience. Therefore, where candidates were inappropriately recruited there was often a high level of drop-out.

The range and diversity of experience and background of all staff in the field of adult literacy needed also to be taken into account. Many had entered the field as volunteers and had worked for some time before being offered paid work. Others might have qualifications for teaching in schools or a craft or vocational qualification if they were working in a college of further education. Any system of accreditation established needed, therefore, to take this into account and should not assume any single route through the educational or training system and into adult literacy work. It was also necessary to recognize that many staff might have no appropriate qualifications but might have a considerable amount of valuable experience.

Although little training had been accredited until that time, there had been a considerable amount of training in the previous ten years. This was either provided through ALBSU funded regional training programmes or else by local education authorities. Much of this training consisted of single day or weekend events and there was no commonly agreed upon curriculum. Information given in local authorities' annual reports to ALBSU suggested that in some areas part-time paid staff had few opportunities for training. Provision was patchy, uncoordinated and varied in quality.

However, a common experience for educational establishments wishing to recruit staff for work in basic skills would include having to sift through batches of application forms of staff who had had several years of part-time work in basic skills with no specific qualifications. Many forms, however, would include several additional pages listing short courses attended and activities undertaken.

Induction training for volunteer tutors was provided by almost all local education authorities and this usually consisted of a series of two hour sessions. The most common pattern was six sessions provided before the prospective volunteer began work with a student or was allocated to assist a paid teacher in a group.

Programmes of accredited training also needed to take into account national trends in vocational training. These included moves towards more competency based programmes where the success of the training which had taken place would be measured by improved performance in the workplace rather than by more formal examinations. There were also moves towards open learning approaches which do not specify a particular format for a course and do not prescribe the process a candidate needs to go through to achieve competence.

ALBSU's aim in establishing its initiatives was therefore to create a

> "How do we justify charging people for training which leads to unpaid work?
>
> ...
>
> I'm concerned about the use and misuse of volunteers to supplement unfunded and underfunded programs.
>
> ...
>
> Accreditation begets accreditation. The learner wants a return on his investment. I'm not sure what reward, other than intrinsic, there would be in Canada for an adult learner to embark on a relatively costly program to become an accredited literacy instructor. Of course, this quandary exists within the context of governments who are happy to declare a war on illiteracy using voluntary support almost exclusively."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

coherent system of national accreditation for staff at all levels of experience and training.

The programmes established would need to have the following characteristics:

> They would need to allow access for all regardless of previous experience or qualifications;
>
> They should give credit for previous experience and training;
>
> They should relate to other more general forms of teacher education and training;
>
> There should be a system of progression from one programme to another and between specific literacy training and general teacher training.

The programmes which have been developed and are already in place are as follows:

Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills (ALBSU City and Guilds 9282)

The Initial Certificate is for volunteers or new staff coming into the service from another area of education or training. It comprises 30 hours of activity (16 hours of coursework, 6 hours of placement/practicum and 8 hours of assignments). This certificate is designed as pre-entry training for paid tutors and volunteers. (Note: ALBSU's position is that unpaid staff should not teach groups.)

Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills (ALBSU/City and Guilds 9281)

The Certificate course is intended for staff who have been employed for six months or more and have some initial training and experience of teaching. The Certificate is for those who have completed the Initial Certificate, or who are experienced, paid practitioners who require accreditation. This certificate is competency-based, recognizes acquired experience and competencies and uses mentors to act as personal tutors/facilitators and assessors. The time to complete the work for this certificate will vary, but will be between one and three years, depending on the strengths and weaknesses of each trainee. There are six broad areas of competence. Trainees must demonstrate competence in *adult learning approaches* and *teaching skills*, as well as competence in *literacy, numeracy*, or *English for speakers of other languages*. There is also a strand on *organization and coordination*.

R.S.A. Diploma in Teaching and Learning in Adult Basic Education

This is intended for very experienced staff who are interested in obtaining a diploma level course.

Each Programme has a different target audience. Participants pay training fees for all certificates. Amounts vary.

The Certificate is the more unusual of the three and is intended to accredit any competence the candidate can demonstrate however it has been acquired. It is an individually designed programme and each candidate is assigned to a *mentor* who acts as advisor and assessor.

The Initial Certificate is more conventional in its format although it does include a teaching placement, assignment work and the completion of a record of achievement which most volunteer training courses did not include previously.

Handbooks for the two new schemes are available free from ALBSU and a handbook for the Diploma is available from the R.S.A. at a small charge.

Many training initiatives can be hampered by lack of funds to run them, particularly when they are new and having to establish credibility. ALBSU has been able to persuade the Department of Education and Science to make funds centrally available to run the three schemes mentioned in this article. This amounts to a maximum of £ 1,400,000 spread over two financial years.

The Unit is in the process of evaluating these programmes and will modify them if this proves necessary. Clearly the world of staff development and training is moving very fast and we are keen to respond to this and perhaps make our contribution to the general changes being made in the area of vocational training.

> "Do we need certification in Canada? Should it be nationally or provincially controlled? What input will learners have in saying what qualities and qualifications their guided tutors should have? How will it affect community and rural literacy groups?"
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

THE ISSUES SURROUNDING ACCREDITATION for instructors and the use of volunteers in literacy programming are controversial and the debate often takes place in an emotionally charged atmosphere with both professionals and volunteers feeling threatened and insecure about their value and job security.

The controversy revolving around the role of the volunteer versus the role of the paid practitioner has many aspects. There is concern that volunteerism perpetuates low wage situations for paid practitioners. Many fear that an increase in skilled volunteers will decrease employment opportunities for instructors. How can we 'protect' the employment of instructors while 'protecting' the popular movement aspects of volunteerism in the field? Do these two objectives have to be mutually exclusive? There is also a concern that an increase in accreditation for practitioners will lead to a decrease in opportunities for volunteers. This could lead to everything being more academic and we would loose the values contributed by volunteers and grassroots organizations.

Accreditation for instructors presents other concerns. As masters degrees and teaching certificates are starting to be considered necessary qualifications for instructor positions, will practitioners with years of practical experience be replaced by newcomers with credentials? Will the experienced be required to spend time and money to acquire credentials to maintain or apply for positions if they wish to continue careers in this field? As a large percentage of literacy practitioners work on part time, non-permanent contracts, there will be no grandfather clause to provide job security.

Wagner presented his view, which was popular with the workshop participants, that we must make on-site professional development a funding priority. At present, due to limited funding, there is a tendency to use the available dollars to reach as many learners as possible. However, Wagner suggests that by developing ourselves professionally we can be more effective thus we will reach more learners.

... from the Facilitator's Report

LEGITIMIZING PRACTITIONERS' SKILLS AND WORTH

WHAT KIND OF TRAINING IS NEEDED FOR PEOPLE WISHING TO ENTER THE FIELD, FOR THOSE WHO HAVE JUST STARTED, AND FOR THOSE WITH LOTS OF EXPERIENCE WHO WANT AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND THEIR KNOWLEDGE? EXAMINE THE PRACTISE AND PHILOSOPHY BEHIND CANADA'S ONLY ESTABLISHED ACCREDITATION PROGRAM IN MONTREAL, QUEBEC, AS A BASIS FOR EVALUATING CURRENT INITIATIVES TO INTRODUCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS IN OTHER PROVINCES, INCLUDING BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Serge Wagner

The first issue is: what is a literacy practitioner? Is s/he becoming a mere technician of reading, writing, computing and 'job-related skill'; that is to say, has s/he less and less power to decide on objectives and content of the educational process? What kind of training is useful for those who enter the literacy field and for those seeking an opportunity to extend their knowledge?

1. The Four W's

The fundamental issue here is probably "what is literacy?". So, before we look more directly at our topic, let us ask ourselves some fundamental questions directly affecting the perspective and content of literacy practitioners' training or upgrading. We will call them the Four W's: what is literacy? who are the illiterates? what has happened in the field of literacy in the last three years? what about the status of literacy workers? For some, these questions may seem 'theoretical' (i.e. non practical, irrelevant or useless); however, the answers to these issues determine literacy education practices and thus literacy practitioner training.

What is Literacy?

Is literacy merely an educational process that allows people to upgrade to the equivalent of secondary school education? That might be true of many so-called *functional illiterates.*

Does literacy relate primarily to the three R's or does it relate also to other skills essential for coping with daily life and for being a full participant in society? Does literacy merely aim to increase basic workplace skills for the new international economic competitiveness and/or is it an empowering process that is *learner-centred*, that takes into account the learner's experience, social context, needs and purposes? Other goals could, of course, be presented and each of those already mentioned are not mutually exclusive; combinations are possible and in fact occur.

Training and upgrading for literacy practitioners would have to take into account the typology of possible literacy goals. Here, choices have to be made.

Who are the Illiterates?

Are illiterate persons lacking some *technical* skills (three R's and some other skills)? Are they people relatively well integrated in society, lacking in an isolated skill and thus needing specific upgrading? Is illiteracy, or limited literacy, a component of the global situation of *poor people* experiencing difficulties in employment, health, housing and social integration? Illiterates are an important percentage of inmates, ethnic minorities, immigrants entering Canada as refugees, social assistance recipients, and single parents (mostly women). For those, illiteracy, embedded in a culture of poverty, would be a component of social and structural inequalities in our society. And at least two perspectives in defining the situation are possible: a deficit perspective (ultimately 'blaming the victim'); or a popular education perspective ('empowering the illiterate').

In Canada, the *student-centred* approach seems dominant (at least in literature). That approach, if applied, is no doubt positive; practitioners take into consideration the individual needs of learners. But it might also have a negative counterpart, somehow resulting in putting aside the social, collective and structural reality of many illiterates in Canada.

What Happened in the Last Three Years?

Literacy in Canada is viewed differently now than three years ago. Significant changes have occurred.

The issue of literacy certainly has gained importance in the late 1980's. This is due to the effect of the Southam Report and the advocacy work done by major Canadian literacy organizations. Involvement of some governments or governmental organizations was also of paramount importance. And increasingly, the voice of the learner is being heard.

In previous years, there was a dominant dichotomy in the literacy field between literacy in school settings and literacy in community-based organizations. The former was said to be formal and the latter pretended to be more flexible, more functional, more learner-centred. In the last three years, this dichotomy has been replaced by new orientations and new differences. As mentioned earlier, economic development goals appeared and became at least as important as 'schooling per se' or 'student-centred' or 'student-empowerment' literacy. The new partners and new governmental policies stress the link between literacy and economic development. This new orientation has a great potential impact on the content of literacy education and thus the content of literacy practitioners' training.

The literacy field was also influenced by a diversification of clienteles and of practices. There are more and more specifically targeted populations (inmates, social welfare recipients, the unemployed, single mothers, immigrants, natives ...). This diversity often implies that there needs to be a diversification of approaches to the specifically targeted populations and to delivery of literacy services: materials, convenient hours, accessible locations and support services (transportation, child care, counselling).

For literacy workers, those new orientations stress the need for specific knowledge and skills related to specific clienteles: in methodology (for instance, the often ambiguous *literacy* for immigrants requires expertise in second language teaching) and in development *strategies* (recruitment, counselling, etc.).

Institutionalization and professionalization has increased recently. Historically, government takeover of a social area (such as education for youth, and health) meant a reduction of the 'charity' model and local voluntary involvement. That is, services are then delivered by civil servants. That has not been the case in the governmental involvement in literacy in the last three years. As in the United States, the new literacy initiatives were focused on an increase of literacy delivery through recruitment of volunteers. What is surprising is that even the public schools and colleges are using (to my knowledge at least) a high number of non-paid literacy 'workers' and, maybe to a smaller scale, part-time paid staff.

Even though more money is spent in adult literacy, a large part of it

> " With no or little funds for delivery – do we use volunteers or not – if it means lack of programming – all or nothing? or compromise with optimism?
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> ...
>
> The idea of action research and professional development being built into programs – support for research, writing, reflection, professional development as part of one's teaching.
>
> ...
>
> A better role than teaching for volunteers is as fundraisers, supporting the continuation of programs and supporting the experts to do their jobs. "
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

seems to be channelled into the volunteerism model that was used previously when there was little or no public funding for literacy. Obviously, the enhancement of volunteerism is part of the 'new' state policy.

What is the Status of Literacy Workers?

The obvious answer is: a rather low status. Already, adult educators generally enjoy a lower (social and economic) status than youth educators in the regular public school system. Within the field of adult education, literacy workers seem to have a lower status. Within educational institutions, literacy programmes may be seen as a lower-status activity compared to *real* academic programmes, or even higher-level ABE programmes. This low status is probably also related to the fact that many of the literacy workers have no job security, are low-income, and part-time *workers.*

And, of course, this low status is probably the reflection of the presence of a very high percentage of unpaid *workers*; according to a recent CMEC study, 80% of teachers in one province are still volunteers. And that situation is also related to the fact that the vast majority of literacy workers are women. Furthermore, a recent survey of literacy workers in Quebec revealed that men are more often than women *directors* or *coordinators* though women are almost always volunteers and teachers. It may be worth noting that, in Quebec, the bulk of volunteers are working in the public school system whereas popular *voluntary* organizations are using paid staff. Volunteerism in these organizations is instead used for boards' participation, advocacy and recruitment purposes.

Finally, even though the status of literacy workers is rather low, their personal and professional involvement in literacy is very high. In the field of adult literacy, there is a sense of specificity, of personal and social commitment, a sense of dedication that is not as common among other educators.

Some of the consequences of the precarious situation of literacy workers may be low income, heavy workloads, burn-out, high turnover (especially for volunteer tutors), and difficulty of establishing a legitimate *career plan.*

We should add that, unlike primary education, there is no single profile or credential for entering the 'literacy education workforce'. Recruitment of literacy workers is often related to local or regional projects that set their own conditions, taking into consideration the content of their specific literacy project (eg.: ESL training for immigrant literacy projects, previous community involvement in community-based projects, etc).

Part of the problem of literacy workers is not related to their training or upgrading; it directly derives from their status and (often bad) working conditions. Too often, training is presented or seen as a solution to problems that are not educational. Radical changes in literacy policies may prove to be quite effective in enhancing literacy practices and the status of literacy practitioners.

2. About Accreditation

Even if it is still limited, the professionalization and institutionalization of the literacy field has opened the question and problem of accreditation of literacy workers. The issue is complex but it is important.

Obviously, the greater part of the accreditation issue can only be dealt with provincially because funding for literacy programs is provided by the provinces (and also because education is a provincial jurisdiction). Having said that, some Canadian or trans-provincial literacy organizations could eventually set up criteria of their own.

To my knowledge, there are two examples of literacy accreditation in Canada. One is the Alberta experience where accreditation is controlled and channelled by the literacy workers themselves.

Another and quite different model is Quebec's new regulation for adult educators. While the new Public Education Act (Loi de l'instruction publique) includes the right of every illiterate adult to get free basic education in the province, the legislation also includes an obligation, for full-time and part- time literacy teachers, to have teacher certification.

One of the negative effects of the new accreditation process in Quebec is the fact that many (hundreds if not thousands) literacy workers will likely lose their jobs; the regulation will be effective in two years and the Department of Education still doesn't know how many literacy teachers do not have teacher certification. There is no provision in the accreditation rules for recognition of literacy workers' experience (reconnaissance des acquis). The system is lacking flexibility. Recognition of experience for those who have worked, pioneered in the field of literacy, often in difficult conditions, is an important equity issue.

Another potential impact of accreditation is that it may well change the orientation of literacy practices. For instance, again in Quebec, according to the new rules on accreditation, almost every teacher of primary or secondary levels are now legally eligible to work in adult literacy education. (In Quebec, the colleges – les CEGEPs – do not provide adult basic education as is the case in English Canada.) The new ruling means that the *schooling* dimension of the literacy programmes will probably increase. It creates a strange situation; adults who often went to schools without learning (adequately) to read and write will go back to school for a 'second chance' with essentially the same kind of teachers. One of the bizarre effects of the new regulation in Quebec, is that literacy practitioners having literacy certificates cannot obtain the teacher's accreditation. Even a person with a Master's degree or a Ph.D. in Adult Education is not eligible for accreditation unless s/he has previously taken a three year course in a teaching programme (merely for youngsters) that leads to teacher certification.

3. About Training

General Remarks

Diversity and flexibility should be key dimensions of training for literacy workers. There should be a place for diversified opportunities for training (from the local literacy scheme to university credited programme) and in the content of training. There is no single model of adequate training because literacy workers do not have the same initial training (as is the case for primary teachers) and also because literacy is a very general term encompassing different strategies (eg. literacy for illiterate immigrants, literacy for Natives, literacy for the mentally handicapped, not to speak about numeracy). This does not mean that there is no common ground and common needs, but in an emerging field like illiteracy/literacy there is little place for premature uniformity.

As stated earlier, recognition of experience (reconnaissance des acquis) should be integrated in every training project, especially

> "Much worry and anger about excluding literacy and ABE tutors and instructors from jobs when an accreditation requirement is implemented: screwing the tutors and 'thanks for all the fish!'
>
> ...
>
> What are the political implications re: employment, status, etc. with respect to accreditation (ie. how to protect the practioners' employment while protecting the popular aspects of the field, its flexibility, etc.?"
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

> “... training of literacy practitioners – does the quality of instruction go up? If so, what are the implications for volunteer versus formal educational settings?
>
> ...
>
> I think the government and we, as practitioners, should focus on the mandated literacy providers provincially and fund educational agencies that are established. It is a sad but true fact that much of the ‘fringe’ money will die with ILY!’ ”
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

when the training is credited and might lead to formal certification.

One often expressed need should be closely assessed: the *methodological* need. Literacy workers are often asking for training in methodology. There are real and legitimate needs in this area. But one should also be aware of the *methodological* myth ... If the success of literacy education was merely related to the adequate utilization of good teaching/instructional techniques (that may be presented in a weekend workshop), every Canadian child schooled in Canada would be fully literate. The reality is more complex. Mastering learning and teaching techniques may be no doubt useful, but adult literacy education is a complex socio-educational practice and cannot be reduced to some basic techniques.

Training in the Literacy Place

Training in the *literacy place* (as an analogy with *literacy in the workplace*) should be a priority in every literacy project. As literacy practitioners, we should apply to ourselves the same objectives we put forward for literacy learners: reading, writing, critical thinking! In Canada, we are now facing a very peculiar situation: learners are writing more and more. Their texts are published. Onemay sometimes wonder if learners are not writing and publishing more than literacy practitioners (coordinators or teachers). Again, if literacy relates at least partly to democratization of knowledge in our society, the production of knowledge inside each literacy scheme should also be democratized. Writing, if the parameters are well-defined, is a very effective and congruent *technique* to understand what happens in our own practice and to see what could eventually be improved or changed.

Training and upgrading should begin at the level of daily practice. Literacy practitioners (like literacy learners) are able to gain knowledge from their own experience. Training should be an on-going process but, as is the case for literacy per se, learning for practitioners will be more effective if it is organized, systematized. Consequently, training should be a part of the literacy practitioners' job. For instance, training objectives should be set, an annual training programme should be planned, and time for training meetings should be scheduled. This training should also be cooperative (that does not exclude the possibility of integrating external expertise in the process) like literacy teaching/learning is supposed to be. And if this training/research activity is a real part of the literacy work, literacy practitioners should be paid for it.

A great part of training and learning can be gained through research. In the mid 30's in Europe, when teacher training began to shift from professional schools to universities, many hoped that this shift would result in each teacher becoming also a research worker. In fact, teacher training was transferred to universities and the profession became more institutionalized, but the research objective was not a complete success. In literacy, research objectives should be more integrated in local literacy planning.

A genuine training/research attitude is of paramount importance in the field of adult literacy because, on one hand, literacy strategies for youngsters – even if they are well supplemented by research – have partially failed (especially in low socio-economic areas) and, on the other hand, the body of research and knowledge on adult literacy in developed countries is quite limited. Furthermore, learning in the literacy place is highly important; ultimately, it is in the *literacy* *place*, in the daily practice, that practitioners use or apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired by reading, by exchanges with colleagues or from more formal training.

One might object that it takes money to do training and research and that adequate funding for literacy is already difficult to obtain. That is a reality and literacy workers and organizations should still be involved in lobbying for adequate funding of literacy activities. Having said that, there are specific funding programmes for research and practitioners' training (eg. the National Literacy Secretariat's programme); and it is written nowhere that research activities can only be done by Canada-wide organizations or universities! 'Action-research' (la recherche-action) and qualitative research are types of research particularly suitable for local literacy projects and funding may be obtained for it. Action-research is particularly interesting because it is easy for literacy workers to verify their reflections in daily practice, and also easy for them to experiment with some hypotheses in their own practice.

Creditation Programmes

Here, we will concentrate on university programmes though creditation may also be offered in colleges.

It would be a mistake to think that initial training for literacy practitioners should be a specific literacy programme. Adult literacy is a new area of intervention, and research on literacy and related areas is limited. Furthermore, literacy is at the crossroads of many disciplines (education, sociology, psychology, linguistics, etc.) and in the field of adult illiteracy/literacy those disciplines still have not merged together in an interdisciplinary perspective. Ideally, literacy practitioners should acquire a solid basic training in a pertinent field (education, linguistics, sociology ...). Then, specific literacy training could be complementary and effective. Therefore, programmes like *summer seminars* or certificates are certainly useful but represent only one area of the potential contribution of universities.

As stated earlier, recognition of experience is an important issue. Furthermore, any university programme should be able to make some individual choices based on previous training and on the experience and specific objectives of each practitioner (eg. courses relating to assessment, sociolinguistics, pedagogy, computer use in education...). This flexibility is not synonymous, especially in formalized programmes, with a *cafeteria* system where everybody makes only individual choices; elements of a programme should be integrated in a coherent ensemble. For instance, in the Université du Quebec (Montreal) literacy certificate, we tried to organize the programme into three complementary areas: theory of literacy, strategy for literacyz and methodology of literacy.

There should be some kind of integration of training in the literacy place, short professional workshops and credited training in universities. University training should be critical. A statement made a few years ago by the McGill University's Faculty of Education seems to apply quite well to literacy: "it is the proper role of the university to offer alternatives, the vision of other ways, the taste of irrelevance, the scent of anarchy and a reverence of excellence".

Often, university training is said to be too theoretical. That may be true, but it is not necessarily negative. Theory represents a specific potential contribution of universities and, if the theory is adequately presented and acquired, it may have great practical effects in literacy practices. On the other hand, one could say that practical training is often too practical with not enough reflection embedded in the process. Ideally, there should be some kind of equilibrium between theory and practice.

> "We need to build research, writing, and reflection into literacy programs (but when?).
>
> ...
>
> ... importance of literacy workers writing, producing ideas, exchanging ideas in the field of literacy...the importance of staff enrichment and professional development on a regular basis."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

ELSA AUERBACH DESCRIBED a participatory learning project among adult Haitian Creole speakers and intern teachers in Boston which exemplifies Fernando Cardenal's ideas on helping learners become teachers. Auerbach explained that as she is the only non-Haitian in the project, and she should *not* be representing it here.

Study of a written dialogue from Creole participants generated the following issues: the urgency to complete educational programs then move on to "real life"; conflicting ideas about relating research to practise; tensions between learners' and teachers' decisions; and the value of first language literacy for immigrants. Auerbach discussed how these issues have largely dissipated since the inception of the project.

First, the project tried to enact a fully *participatory* approach by relating all instruction to issues and themes in the lives of the cultural community, confronting and resolving the differential of power between teachers and learners, and challenging policies of English-only by focusing on Creole literacy.

Second, the project used five successful processes:1) teacher sharing at weekly meetings; 2) problem-posing (rather than problem solving) by all participants; 3) mentoring to bridge between all levels; 4) ongoing inquiry trying out new approaches in instruction; and 5) cultural contextualizing by referring to materials from literacy campaigns in Haiti.

Third, key tools used were language experience stories, photo stories and dialogues, Creole readings, and key words for a North American context.

Participants were interested in Auerbach's approach to teacher preparation, community building, power-sharing, valorizing student's first language (especially a stigmatized one like Creole), interpersonal sensitivity, and ongoing questioning. Some will reconsider their concepts of expertise and authority in order to be more sensitive to students' cultures and values, to experiment with less structured programs, and to reshape their ideas of teacher accreditation.

... from the Facilitator's Report

MOVING ON: FROM LEARNER TO TEACHER

Elsa Auerbach

WHAT KIND OF PROGRAM HELPS LEARNERS, WHO WANT TO BECOME TEACHERS, SUCCEED? INVESTIGATE A UNIQUE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND THE UNIVERSITY, WHERE A LITERACY TEACHING EDUCATION PROJECT HELPS FORMER LITERACY LEARNERS BECOME LITERACY WORKERS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

As more and more immigrants and refugees line up at the doors of adult education centers, the challenges for educators become increasingly complex. Classes are large, waiting lists are long, resources are limited and the pressure to move students quickly through programs is great. A growing percentage of students have little or no prior schooling, are unable to read and write in their first language (L1) and have barely begun to learn English. Classes are mixed in terms of level, educational background and language group. Teachers often share neither language nor socio-cultural background with the students. The least literate students are lost in class, making virtually no progress, and often drop out. Teachers have a hard time finding out about students' concerns and strengths, are frustrated by the conflicting demands of a diverse group and often don't know what to do with the 'lowest' students and the more advanced students' impatience with the learning pace. Since funding is increasingly contingent on job placements and quantifiable progress (and the least literate students take more time to show gains or become 'employable'), many programs are forced to turn low level students away or relegate them to waiting lists.

At the same time, the communities of the learners are rich with people who have strong first language literacy skills and deep commitment to their own communities, but whose English skills and educational credentials are limited. They may be people who were community leaders or professionals in their homelands; they may be students who have excelled in ESL classes, helping to develop curriculum and supporting their fellow students; or they may be activists in their current neighbourhoods and communities. They are intimately familiar with the needs and concerns of literacy students, as well as with issues of cultural and linguistic transition. Very often, however, even as their English improves, it is difficult for them to find meaningful work. They find themselves doing menial jobs because of the gatekeeping mechanisms of our economic system which relegates newcomers to the bottom rungs of the socio-economic ladder.

The Bilingual Community Literacy Training Project (BCLTP) was designed to address the educational needs of the former group of students by drawing on the strengths and resources of the latter. It is a university/community collaboration in which people from the communities of the literacy learners (who may not have traditional educational qualifications but who have demonstrated commitment and leadership) are trained to become literacy instructors in their own communities.

Background and Rationale for the Project

The need for this kind of an approach to literacy for language minority learners was identified in part through the work of the UMass/Boston Family Literacy Project. In that project, three community-based adult literacy programs worked with UMass to implement a participatory approach to family literacy. In a nutshell, we started with the issues and concerns of adult literacy students and developed curricula around what was important for them (see Auerbach 1990). Since our approach was context-specific, differing from site to site according to student needs, we were able to explore and reflect on a number of variables impacting literacy development (including the role of teacher background factors, the role of L1 literacy instruction as a bridge to ESL, and the role of ESL level in implementing a participatory approach). What we found was:

1) Students' view of literacy as a meaning-making process and their ability to use literacy in socially significant ways in their families/communities was enhanced by following a participatory process. Using issues from their own lives as content increased the quantity and quality of their reading and writing.

2) The lower the level, the more difficult it was to implement this process, especially if teachers and students didn't speak the same language. In fact, whole groups of students never even came to ESL classes because their literacy levels impeded participation.

3) Inversely, when teachers shared students' language or aspects of life experience, finding themes was facilitated. When L1 was used, formerly excluded students were more willing to participate.

4) The conceptual content as well as the quantity and quality of their written work was enhanced when students were free to use their first language to develop ideas.

5) The atmosphere of trust, sharing, and communication was facilitated by commonalities between students and teachers.

6) Students who had participated in L1 literacy classes progressed more rapidly in ESL classes.

Thus, we began to question two widely held assumptions: that use of English-only is always most effective in ESL classes, and that native English speakers with advanced credentialing are always most qualified to teach ESL. Rather, we moved toward seeing the importance of developing L1 literacy as a bridge to ESL and of allowing for language choice in the ESL classroom (where students decide which langauge to use depending on task, level, etc.). We saw that teachers who shared background factors with students could play a critical role in this process because they have familiarity with and access to students' backgrounds and concerns; their common experience and in some cases common language help in establishing trust and overcoming power differentials. Further, since the goal of a participatory approach is increasing learner involvement in all aspects of programming (from needs assessment to materials and curriculum development), training learners to be come instructors seemed a logical direction.

These conclusions were by no means arrived at in a vacuum. Practitioners in the Boston adult literacy community were increasingly calling for both L1 literacy services and training opportunities for language minority participants. Several programs developed a small project to train students as administrative and classroom assistants. L1 literacy classes, usually taught on a limited basis by volunteers, were started in a few sites. The specific impetus for our own proposal came from the programs participating in the Family Literacy project which wanted to be able to support the development of learners as teachers.

At the same time, the professional literature has been increasingly pointing to evidence of the importance of L1 literacy as a basis for L2 acquisition in (eg. Cummins 1981; Rivera 1988; Weinstein 1984), focusing on expanded roles for bilingual/bicultural ESL/literacy instructors (eg. Spiegel 1988; Thonis 1990), and the advantages of drawing on L1 resources in the classroom (eg. Collingham 1988). It was in this context that the BCLTP emerged, with the goals of:

1) training a core of bilingual literacy interns from the communities of the learners through a participatory training process;

2) implementing and evaluating a participatory approach to first langauge literacy instruction as a bridge to ESL; and

3) evaluating the effectiveness of this community intern model in both mixed language and single language contexts.

Project Design

The BCLTP began on a pilot basis in January 1990 at one site, the Haitian Multi-Service Center (HMSC). We chose to work at the HMSC because it is a true community center for Haitians in the Boston area. It is open day and night, weekdays and weekends, providing ESL classes, daycare, legal assistance and counselling as well as housing numerous other community projects (AIDS education, oral history, teen health education, theatre, etc.). Classes are full to overflowing and have long waiting lists. The project has enabled the HMSC to establish a Haitian Creole literacy component and later a bilingual component to bridge the transition from Creole to ESL. The work at this site will be the focus of the rest of this paper.

The core group of the Project over the past year included a university-based coordinator (myself), a half-time Master Teacher, and four interns, all of whom are Haitian with the exception of the coordinator. Participants have a range of strengths and community connection. Jean-Marc Jean-Baptist, the Master Teacher for the first nine months, has worked in the Center for many years. As education coordinator, he had begun teaching Creole literacy on his own, with a few volunteers; his mother was one of the students in his class. Recently he has been appointed Director of the HMSC, a fact which was celebrated by a special mass at the Haitian Catholic Church. The interns include Marie Julien, a long-time resident of Boston who is fluent in English and intimately familiar with the problems and needs of the learners as a result of her in-take work at the HMSC; Mireille Cassignol who enroled as a student speaking virtually no English when she arrived from Haiti less than a year ago and has now passed her GED; Romeo Estinvil who also spoke little English when he arrived two years ago, was involved with a literacy radio program in Haiti and asked to join the project to continue this work while studying for his GED here; and Liotha St. Pierre, the church choir leader, who asked to participate in the project as a way of contributing to her community.

Our original proposal was to provide a ten-month, three cycle training process for interns. During the first cycle, interns would observe the Master Teacher; during the second, they would take on more teaching responsibility under his/her supervision; and during the last cycle, they would work independently in pairs (with two interns per class). Concurrently, they would participate in weekly site-based training meetings and monthly workshops. We adapted this model to fit the needs of the HMSC so that interns would be able to serve the students on the long waiting lists as quickly as possible. This meant that some interns with prior teaching experience went directly to cycle two, working in their own classes under supervision. Thus, from the beginning, the project enabled the Center to accommodate at least 75 additional students. There are four Creole literacy classes, and two bilingual beginning ESL classes supported by the program. Interns spend six to eight hours per week teaching and two hours in a training meeting; they receive stipends of about $325 per month.

Training

From the beginning, we felt that the training process should model the approach that we are trying to implement in literacy classes. Namely, that it be based on real issues and concerns of participants, that it be participatory and interactive (with participants sharing experiences and making decisions as a group, rather than 'receiving' information transmitted by an 'expert'), and that it be contextualized in the cultural values and experiences of the learners. We found that this model wasn't always easy to implement; like participatory curriculum development, participatory training had to develop over time.

Training started with an intense two-day 'pre-service' workshop conducted by a leading participatory educator from California. While the workshop itself was an eye-opening hands-on experience in participatory methods, the carry-over to classes wasn't immediate. Likewise, the early weekly meetings which focused on instructional methods selected by the coordinator generated interest and discussion in themselves but didn't seem to have much impact on instruction. The content of the talk was about literacy as a meaning-making process, about the need to contextualize instruction and connect it to social issues, but practice still focused a good deal on isolated mechanical skills – alphabet and sound exercises, etc. On the one hand, interns expected Jean-Marc and me, as Master Teacher and Coordinator, to tell them what to do; and on the other, we felt a pressure to meet their expectations.

Gradually, we developed a different pattern to our meetings, a pattern of starting with classroom realities and moving toward a sharing of ideas in response to them. Instead of coming in with a training topic, we went around the circle, asking questions, like, "What happened in your class this week? What did you do? How did you feel about it? What was new? What went well? What problems or issues arose?" As we listened to each other, we tried to identify common issues, addressing them first by naming the concern, then asking how other people experienced it, how they might address it, and what resources they needed (materials, training, structural support, etc.). As we talked about methods or approaches to solving classroom problems, we stressed a stance of investigation – that no one could tell anyone else what to do, but rather that each teacher was a scientist of his/her own classroom whose job was to experiment, to try something, and evaluate it.

By sharing students' concerns, we identified our own concerns: for example, the first question that we had to struggle with was resistance to the notion of a Creole class. Students felt that they had come to learn English; they already knew Creole. Some went so far as to say teaching Creole was a way to keep them ignorant. As we shared ways of responding to students' queries, we realized that some of the interns had a hard time explaining the rationale for the classes because they weren't comfortable with it themselves. We spent a great deal of time talking about socio-political sources of negative attitudes toward Creole and pedagogical reasons for teaching literacy in Creole. As a result of these discussions, we invited in community members to give workshops on the rationale for Creole literacy for the whole Center. There was center-wide discussion about the political context of the literacy situation in Haiti, various literacy campaigns and their methodologies, especially Misyon Alfa (a Freire-inspired campaign). We set up Creole training sessions for teachers and added once a week ESL classes for Creole literacy students in response to their requests. We discussed how to use and evaluate existing materials; identified the need for better materials and training on eliciting student stories; and we began the process of developing Creole materials for the U.S./Boston context.

In addition, since Jean-Marc had his own class, and I also had time to co-teach and attend interns' classes during the summer, we were able to:

1) implement the methods that we were discussing in meetings;

2) model the development of materials based on students' issues;

3) model methods in the interns' classes; and

4) observe the strengths and challenges facing the interns as they taught.

In group meetings, we could tell our stories alongside everyone else, breaking down the *expert/learner* distinction. Dialogue about shared experiences (where we each talked about the same situation from different perspectives) seemed to validate and draw out the interns' expertise. A kind of cross-fertilization took place, with one intern's strengths becoming the inspiration for others to try new things.

> "I am NOT the expert. I am in this to learn what to do and how to do it. This can only be done by consulting with tutors, trainers and learners as equals.
>
> ...
>
> Many were excited by how students and interns learned and collaborated by questioning and challenging the methodology and gradually come to appreciate their own language and stories.
>
> ...
>
> Maybe we are marginalizing our profession by an overconcern with 'credentializing' ourselves to make ourselves more professional."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

> "Perhaps we are not valuing our own life and professional experiences sufficiently.
>
> ...
>
> How does literacy in Creole really help literacy in English? What are the transition points? Would it be a good idea to go from Creole to French first since Creole is based on French?
>
> ...
>
> I liked the sharing of the power, the trusting of the teachers to develop a method that would work."
>
> ... from Participant's Response Cards

To summarize, our training model included the following elements:

1) *teacher-sharing*, starting with participants' practice as the basis for mutual learning;

2) *problem-posing*, identifying teaching issues and drawing on group resources to address them;

3) *mentoring and modelling*, pairing more and less experienced teachers with each other to facilitate teaching by demonstration and dialogue;

4) *experimenting*, encouraging a stance of inquiry and practitioner research within the classroom;

5) *cultural contextualizing*, drawing on culturally familiar teaching models and on community resources.

Curriculum Development and Materials

The curriculum development process has mirrored the training process to a large extent. While at the beginning, curriculum concerns focused on finding the single 'best' set of materials or methods to implement in the classroom, we have moved toward developing a range of context-specific methods, tools and materials. Where the initial focus was on transmitting skills, often in a decontextualized, mechanical way (copying letters or words in isolation), the focus in the classes now is more on finding ways to link dialogue about students' reality and needs in a North American context to reading and writing. Interns have moved from seeing instruction as putting things *into* students' heads toward seeing it as drawing *out* what's in their heads.

A number of issues arose as we tried to implement a participatory approach in the classroom:

1) students wanted a textbook, seeing it as the legitimate vehicle for learning;

2) it wasn't easy to elicit students' stories/concerns because neither interns nor students are familiar with the process;

3) developing materials from students' stories was a time-consuming job.

Thus, we started by working with existing materials as a basis for moving toward our own curriculum. We set ourselves the task of exploring the appropriateness of two Creole literacy texts for use in a North American context, *Goute Sel* and *Aprann Li*. Ultimately, we decided to take elements we liked from each, with each intern trying what felt comfortable in his/her situation.

As a group, we have begun identifying *mokle* for a North American context, based both on interns' own lived experience of the Haitian reality in Boston and on what emerges from classroom interaction with students. Since students like having a text, several interns use *Goute Sel* as a starting point or catalyst for discussion, adapting the themes to their reality in Boston and using them as a basis for cultural comparison. As students discuss issues or stories from their lives, teachers write their stories, using a language experience approach. In some classes, interns use culture-specific genre, like proverbs and riddles to generate discussion, or Haitian songs as texts. We have begun collecting Creole newspaper articles and political cartoons to address the need for more sophisticated materials. One class has begun identifying themes and developing texts using a Polaroid camera: each student is given the camera for one night and told to take a picture of "something that's important for

Haitians living in Boston". Students collect the pictures and select one for the day's lesson. Discussion questions include, "What do you see in this picture?" and "what does this picture make you think about?". The intern writes key words from this discussion on the board and then asks, "What do you want to say about this picture?". The process goes back and forth between writing and discussion, with each student contributing a sentence to the story that the intern writes. The students then read the story chorally, work on key words, etc. The story is typed with key word exercises for further work.

Central to this transition from a text/teacher-centred approach to a more student-centred approach is constant talk about the approach and methodology itself – what I call *meta-talk* – which involves reflecting on learning. Interns constantly share their reasons for eliciting student talk, and involve students in making decisions about what they should do. One intern, for example, read (and translated) a teachers' guide about the Language Experience Approach to her class; another critiqued *Goute Sel*. Classes discuss why literacy involves both conscientization and mechanical aspects, why students have not been able to go to school until now (the socio-political context for illiteracy), why they are learning literacy in Creole, and why dialogue is important to literacy acquisition. Each class participated in a group evaluation process, discussing what they have learned, want to learn, like and don't like in class.

To summarize, curriculum development has centered around the following *tools and processes:*

1) use and adaptation of *Haitian literacy Creole texts;*

2) *mokle* (key words) developed for a North American context;

3) *photography;*

4) *language experience stories;*

5) *culture-specific forms and genres* (songs, proverbs, riddles);

6) *authentic Creole materials* (eg. cartoons, newspaper articles); and the following content: reasons for literacy/illiteracy, feelings about the use of Creole, violence in Boston and Haiti, the political situation in Haiti, cultural comparisons (families in Haiti/ U.S., shopping), finding work, religion, students' personal stories, and classroom choices and evaluation.

Impact and Issues

Although this project is still very much in process, and it is premature to draw conclusions about its effectiveness, it has already had a strong impact at the HMSC. While at the beginning of the project students resisted the idea of Creole classes, they now not only understand their importance but ask to stay in them until their literacy is strong enough to do well in ESL. Learning Creole is no longer stigmatized and the classes are no longer marginalized from the educational structure of the Center. Students who began during the spring and summer are in the post-alphabetization stage now. They talk about being able to read and write longer passages, take dictation and do more for themselves outside school. Some students identify telling stories as their greatest strength, a strength which they formerly didn't recognize. Many students who were not progressing at all before are now making progress; some have begun moving on to ESL classes; others who had formerly dropped out of the program because they couldn't keep up are returning. Retention and attendance have increased significantly. In fact, the project has

"... students and interns learned by questioning (challenging) the methodology and gradually came to appreciate their own language and stories.

...

The intern teacher's relationship to student-learners is as important as credentials.

...

We must rethink the emphasis on credentials in education, especially literacy training."

... from Participants' Response Cards

totally failed in reducing the waiting list and class sizes. More and more students are coming to the Center because they have heard how good the program is and literacy classes are overflowing. The interns also have made significant changes. Their teaching is less mechanical and more issue/dialogue-centred; they are more comfortable with a range of tools and methods; they have changed from teacher-centred to more participatory teaching styles; they have moved from a stance of hoping to be told what to do to taking the initiative; they have become investigators of their own classrooms, exploring a range of methods and materials and increasingly involving students in discussions about the method; they have become each others' best resources in staff development.

Of course, there continue to be unresolved issues, both pedagogical and programmatic. Some of these are the same concerns facing any participatory literacy project: how to balance planning and spontaneity in the classroom; how to deal with 'hot' issues (religion, violence, politics); how to elicit stories; how to integrate published materials with student-created materials; how to challenge students' traditional, teacher-centred models of education; how to work in multi-level classes; how to work within time and money constraints. There is an ongoing tension between training and service needs. Because of the pressure to service as many students as possible, training sometimes gets short-changed. Further, just when interns are becoming comfortable and skilled in their work, they have to make way for a new group of interns (because the grant limits training to ten months). Thus, the biggest challenge facing us is how to institutionalize this model so that interns can become part of the teaching staff once they have been trained.

Despite these problems and the very preliminary nature of our work, the BCLTP suggests two powerful new directions to explore in the next decade: the first is incorporating L1 bilingual ESL components as an integral part of educational provision for adult ESL/literacy students; the second is opening the ranks of practitioners to people from the communities of the learners. Breaking down the traditional barriers between professional educators, community people and learners can only broaden our resources in facing the challenges of the nineties as together we teach and learn.

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> "How to handle our need to control, our fear things will fall apart if we don't know what we are doing – or if we admit this to our students.
>
> ...
>
> ... looking critically at different teaching styles.
>
> ...
>
> ...the use of teaching interns from the same racial/socioeconomic group."
>
> ... from Participants' Response Cards

TRACKING THE PROCESS: DESIGN, IDEAS, INITIATIVES

TRACKING REPORT

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LITERACY 2000 CONFERENCE EVALUATIONS

FOLLOW-UP TO LITERACY 2000

TRACKING THE PROCESS

HOW CAN YOU BE EVERYWHERE AT ONCE SO YOU CAN COMMENT ON ALL THE CRITICAL ISSUES, DEBATES, AND PROGRAM IDEAS DISCUSSED AT THE CONFERENCE? DURING LITERACY 2000, WORKSHOP FACILITATORS WILL KEEP TRACK OF PARTICIPANTS' VIEWS ON THOSE IDEAS WHICH ARE THE MOST INTERESTING, ON PROGRAM INITIATIVES WHICH CAN BE IMPLEMENTED NOW, AND ON THOSE ISSUES OR QUESTIONS WHICH ARE IDENTIFIED AS BEING ESPECIALLY SIGNIFICANT FOR FUTURE WORK. YOU WILL BE ASKED TO WRITE DOWN YOUR COMMENTS ON INDEX CARDS AT THE END OF EACH WORKSHOP. FACILITATORS WILL MEET WITH THE CONFERENCE TRACKER TO PREPARE THE TRACKING REPORT FOR THE NEXT DAY'S PLENARY. AND, IF SOMETHING HAS BEEN MISSED, THE OPEN FORUM AFTER THE TRACKER'S PRESENTATION ALLOWS EVERYONE TO HAVE A SAY.

Richard Darville

Tracking Report

First Session

In the first tracking session, I wanted to do two things: first, to describe some of the outstanding themes that people wrote in response to the opening plenary, and then to focus on one issue that has come up in the discussion.

After the opening plenary, many people reflected on whose agenda literacy is, and looked to the larger social, economic and political context. Most were sceptical concerning ideas about workplace literacy *if that is defined from above;* some were sceptical about the idea of functional literacy if that is based on an assumption that lacking a skill is always having a problem. At least one person noted that mass media are propagandistic and anti-learning, and that to become knowledgeable and to have a voice is to swim against the tide.

Many people noted our present relatively good fortune, with concern over whether financial support for literacy will continue in recession and restraint – and in particular support for innovation.

Many connected literacy to broader social movements (including people who are women, workers, native, francophones, hearing impaired, older, and others) to social justice issues. Some, however, were cautious about this approach; they said the social justice questions are important but they sound socialistic, or that literacy work so broadly conceived is hard to distinguish from social work. Clearly, there needs to be more discussion within the literacy movement about these broader questions.

Every connection to a social movement raises a series of further questions. Regarding just one example, aboriginal literacy, people raised questions about teaching literacy in native languages to help in their preservation, and how this relates to literacy in English or French that is more extensively, and officially, used. People raised questions about whether literacy itself is a kind of relation to a mainstream culture that is alien to aboriginal traditions.

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From the plenary and the first workshops, one prominent theme concerning literacy is a learners' agenda – learners defining what literacy is and what should be learned. These questions about learners raise a series of parallel questions about practitioners and how they can learn to assist and support a learners' movement. These questions have arisen at this very Conference, with learners reporting that some of the plenary presentations were hard to understand, or with some learners in workshops evidently being confused about how to use the response cards that have been handed out.

Many of the questions have to do with connections between speaking and writing, or what can be called orality and literacy. Literacy of course is 'marks on paper', as the play called them – *frozen words*. Orality is simply words that people speak; once they've been said they're gone; they're not *frozen* but *runny*.

For learners to take more control over literacy programs involves using the *frozen words*, the paperwork of meetings and bureaucracies. This brings up some hard questions. For example, for learner involvement, there needs to be ways of making sure everybody understands the agenda – the list of what we will do at the meeting. We need to find ways of making sure everybody understands the minutes – the record of what people said – and to find ways of letting as many people as possible learn to take the minutes. Then, of course, there are the bureau-cratic forms and the government policy statements that are often confusing even to practitioners.

The questions about the *runny words* may be even harder, at least harder for university-educated practitioners. When we talk we very often mix in*frozen words*. We refer to things we've read. We assume other people have also read them. To engage with learners who are taking control requires that we talk differently. Talking differently means we need also to think differently. We need to explain more. We need to locate the knowledge more in our experience and with other people in the room, and less in the books. This is a tall order.

The Mission Statement of the Learner Action Group of Canada, that was heard in the plenary session, raises three questions for us to consider:

1. Do you agree?
2. To increase learner involvement, what are the first things you would do?
3. What would give you a hard time?

Second Session

In the conference discussions there has been a striking attention to particulars and contexts. Facilitators reporting on workshops repeatedly say that people ask persistent, particular questions – wanting to know how it works, what you do, how often it meets, where the money comes from – about a particular program in particular circumstances. That is, most of the discussion has not been ideological. It has not been about looking for one right way of doing things, on abstract principle.

At the same time, people have over and over wanted to understand these particulars and contexts in terms of the question of whose agenda literacy is. Teaching and learning have been related to broader social and economic processes.

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Four themes have emerged from workshops and discussions.

The first theme is, again, learner-centred literacy work, and literacy as a learners' movement. In workshops and corridors there has been a lot of discussion of this. Some people have sounded notes of caution: that teacher and learner interests aren't always the same; that involvement in operating programs means going to meeting after meeting, something that practitioners get tired of; that there is immense time required to rewrite various reports so that everyone can read them.

People have also said that the important thing is to open up a forum for discussion, to hear what people say and think. (After all, as one person said on a note, "New learners are not new thinkers.")

Several workshops have let us see some of the new ways of thinking and acting that appear when learners and communities are at the centre of literacy work. Several workshops have described ways that learners or members of learners' communities can be central in teaching or recruiting. The Ontario Federation of Labour BEST program trains union members to serve as teachers of co-workers. In the University of Massachusetts Family Literacy Project, Haitian Creole learners – who can speak with other learners in their mother tongue – are the teachers. They are supported by the program coordinator. In Sweden, experiments in putting recruitment work for basic education programs into the hands of trade unions and other popular organizations have produced significant increases in participation.

Other workshops have shown us that teaching itself changes when learners take the lead. Literacy may not be the greatest interest; it doesn't open all doors. To involve people with limited literacy, we need to see that. For example, a program at East End Literacy in Toronto started out as the Family Literacy Group, but changed itself into the Family Issues Group; women still worked on their reading and writing skills, but literacy work came to focus equally on advocacy with the Board of Education for plain language and against psychological jargon. The Snowdrift Chipewyan Project in the Northwest Territories has learned that a whole language method may not work for some aboriginal learners, indeed that the forms of progressive pedagogy we have worked long and hard to develop can be a burden for some.

Workshops have also shown us that one important area of movement in reducing distance between teachers and learners is among women. In the Family Issues Group, again, *all participants* are women, and this makes the discus-sion flow. In the conference workshop on women's needs for literacy, many women and men present sensed the equalizing of relationships that happens when the conditions of women's lives are put at the centre of discussion.

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A second theme of many workshops has been workplace literacy. The situation is extremely complex.

Some of what we have learned turns conventional wisdom on its head. We often think of limited skill as creating need and frustration. But the Statistics Canada *Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities* shows that most workers, like most people with limited literacy, are satisfied with their abilities.

We often think of technological change as producing increased literacy demands. But a description of work in British Columbia sawmills has emphasized that technology often makes training shorter and work less literate. In a different way, WORKBASE in England has learned that literacy work may not come out of enlarged jobs, but may itself be a tool for challenging the organization of unskilled work, and the low status and power of unskilled workers.

On the other hand, we've heard that some familiar truths are still true. Workers who come to programs want not only job skills, but also a greater capacity to talk with doctors, make friends, read to kids, and so on. And unorganized workers and unemployed workers often feel the greatest needs for increased literacy and for educational certificates.

Employers' interests and responses to literacy issues vary tremendously. The OFL's BEST program has found that many employers value literacy programs for the higher morale that workers in them have. Other employers, we heard candidly from a B.C. forest industry executive, respond to literacy awareness primarily by tightening up their testing and screening of new employees.

Finally, educators in workplace literacy, we have heard, often don't understand employers, don't understand unions, and have a lot to learn about how to operate in these settings. Part of the learning involves the artful compromises to be made between educators' views, management's views and workers' and unions' views.

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Another theme has been training for tutors and for paid literacy workers. Several workshops looked at training issues for practitioners of different varieties.

In the Hackney project, the thoughtful coordination of tutors begins with interviews that ask why volunteers want to teach, and why they want to teach adults. People are sometimes told to volunteer elsewhere. There is a careful training process, and also an understanding that the most difficult task for a volunteer is one-to-one tutoring, away from the supportive dynamic of a group, and with no backup at hand. There are routes for volunteers to move on to paid work. The BEST program, again, uses workers as teachers, and gives about three weeks' training.

Also in England, ALBSU recognizes prior learning in its training and certification of literacy practitioners. The training can range beyond 20 and 80 hours. (Eighty hours is about equivalent to two one-term Canadian university courses.)

Training before doing literacy work is, of course, not the only possibility. Workshops here conducted by literacy researchers have emphasized training in the program, practitioners reflecting on their practice, practitioners writing. This requires, of course, that literacy practitioners have time, on the job, to engage in such reflection.

Training can come round and hit us in the back of the head. There's a story from Quebec about this. As a result of recent policy changes in Quebec, every permanent school board teacher has to have a university certificate; now hundreds of teachers (mostly women) are losing jobs, including people with ten years and more of experience.

There is obviously a question here: how can training for practitioners strengthen literacy work and not disorganize by bureaucratizing it?

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Finally a few remarks about funding for literacy programs, and policy and social justice.

What we do in literacy work is often to create spaces where people can become more than they have been. More and more often the voices of learners are heard. In the process, many truths are brought to light in public, in writing, including questions about how literacy is related to poverty and how it is related to the oppression of women. In these ways and others, in literacy work there's a genuine democratic impetus.

Yet across Canada we are doing these things under conservative regimes. Although many governments promote literacy, they don't promote fuller democracy and economic justice. There aren't official policies to reduce gaps in education, income, political resources. There's some truth in a picture of literacy as an issue that's been hoisted onto the agenda with intentions of increasing productivity and competitiveness, but which, once it is on the agenda, opens up very different possibilities.

This is a complicated and risky situation. My observation is that we need to get better at describing and analyzing and acting on it. Let me describe two ways that this has struck me during the conference.

At dinner one night there were speeches from visiting politicians. As they talked, or rather read their speeches, many of us hissed and groaned, although not very noisily. Hisses don't explain themselves, but I suspect we hissed because we listen to the politicians' words and hear them representing a system that doesn't share many aims of literacy work. Yet the politicians' presence is puzzling at the same time, because those men and the system that they speak for are a direct part of the social process that brought us all to New Westminster.

Here's another way I've been struck at the conference by the complicated and risky situation we're in. There's been, quite rightly, some discussion of the B.C. government's failure to respond very positively to the recommendations of the literacy advisory committee that it set up. It's not a secret, but only a few people here know just where the recommendations are stuck. They have been supported by the Ministry of Advanced Education, but the cabinet committee that oversees spending has refused to consider them before the budget-planning process for next year. I'm not saying this is good news. But it's important to understand such things about how the government bureaucracy works (about politicians too, of course). It's important to understand such things so that we don't just treat government like a black box, and bang on the outside of it without knowing what's going on inside that we might affect.

Raising these reflections about funding, policy and social justice just keeps leading on to difficult questions. How should we think about and work with people who are both somewhat on our side, and somewhat not? How can we push forward the understanding of literacy as a human right, so that partial interests in literacy for productivity, or for functioning, don't come to stand for the whole interest in literacy?

I'm sure you can add to the questions.

SUMMARIZING THE PROCESS

Joyce Cameron, Gillies Malnarich, Catherine Bissett

The catalogue description of the tracking process is what we hoped would occur at Literacy 2000. Workshop writeups in the catalogue posed questions to focus attention on critical issues. The keynote speaker was selected to provide a global perspective, and panelists from varied literacy backgrounds were asked to define these issues. Rather than solicit speakers, we invited presenters who could contribute to forwarding literacy workers' thinking and practise. Rooms and a notice board were provided for "hot topics", so participants could add or continue workshops. Response cards were designed so participants could briefly comment on issues in each workshop. Facilitators were assigned to the opening plenary and each workshop to summarize and report on issues expressed in discussion and on the cards. A *tracker* was chosen to synthesize the reports and identify emerging key issues. Plenaries were set throughout the conference to encourage debate. A closing working brunch was organized so participants could plan follow-up activities and network.

What did this actually look like in practise?

Presenters were asked to speak on the issues outlined in the catalogue descriptions of workshops and to allow a minimum of one-half hour for debate and discussion. Most presenters did this. Despite written guidelines however, some presenters ignored or only partly addressed their topics and some delivered lectures. This obviously limited debate. (All presenters will be sent the index cards from their workshop and so will receive participants' feedback on the issues and, to some extent, on the presentation.)

Some participants took advantage of the opportunity to organize hot topic sessions. These were organized on popular education with Fernando Cardenal, on the B.C. government's response to the Provincial Literacy Advisory Committee's recommendations, and on successful literacy grant applications for cost-shared funds. As well, one scheduled workshop continued into the next session. Unfortunately, only one such session appointed a facilitator and taped the session. Hot topics do seem to be a valuable way to make emerging issues legitimate, but their contribution to the conference could have been stronger if they had been reported to the tracker or at plenary sessions.

The response cards were instrumental in identifying key issues and concerns. The facilitators, who met as a group with the tracker along with one conference Chair after each workshop block, found participants' comments thoughtful and clearly based on rich experience. Some partici-pants found the cards' questions awkward or had difficulty responding immediately, but many more felt it was a useful means of focusing their thoughts. The purpose of the cards, though, should have been explained at each workshop so that those who missed the opening plenary would understand the tracking process. As well, the process needs to be adapted to allow learners to participate comfortably. For example, the arrangement of support people to assist students needs to be more structured and oral responses should be an option.

After each facilitators' meeting, the tracker discussed issues with one, two or all three conference organizers to decide on the focus of the plenary report. It proved to be extremely difficult for a small group to pull together the range, variety and depth of workshop discussions and for one person to adequately report. Later, Richard Darville, the tracker, wrote:

> "My sense as tracker was that the dynamics of the debate weren't tracked. These were very complicated and rich and not easily represented, even if they were present in the collection of facilitators' reports. What happened was that some particular themes got fed back to the general conference."

Richard's remarks coincide with those from many of the participants. They felt that the process would have worked better if more people had participated, especially in the plenary presentations. Some participants said that having a male tracker did not reflect the gender composition of the field and was sexist.

A few participants suggested the physical set-up of the plenaries hindered debate. The threatre-type seating and light focused on the stage made cross-discussion difficult.

Despite these drawbacks, many evaluation cards expressed enthusiasm for the tracking process and the oppor-tunity to hear about other workshops. It appears that this attempt at capturing, disseminating and stimulating debate was worthwhile, but it requires refinements that more experience will make possible.

The working brunch on Sunday received mixed reviews. Some felt it was terrific and very useful in planning new directions. Others enjoyed the food and company but thought it was too tiring and scattered. How can conferences come to a conclusion which draws on past days and lays plans for the days to come, given that people are tired and need to catch planes? This is a conundrum which is yet to be resolved, and one faced by all conference organizers.

Our objectives for Literacy 2000 were ambitious. They have not been completely realized, but we have been encouraged by the contribution the conference has made to helping participants and ourselves evaluate and reformulate our present work and plans for future work.

Did the Conference achieve its goals?

1. Did it explore innovative programmes and research?

I particularly enjoyed and made maximum use of the opportunity to learn about and dialogue with international literacy contacts.

I really enjoyed the high quality information on innovative work.

2. Did it provide a forum for identifying and debating important issues?

One thing that really sticks in my mind is that we don't lose sight of why we are involved in literacy programming and who the programming is for.

Although fatigued, I would like more occasions like the working brunch, maybe sooner than the last morning. I know sometimes this doesn't work but in this case for me the discussion was stimulating, new people, good sharing.

I believe that the diversity of literacy initiatives is a strong point. We shouldn't be the same. We should recognize that people can have different ideas about literacy.

The plenary helped me integrate the information and organize the concepts.

Richard's summaries and exploration of aspects of different themes was excellent.

Plenary, tracking, Sunday morning, excellent.

Exciting debate came of the conference.

The "Hot Topic" sessions were a valuable addition to the scheduled workshop/forums.

Sunday plenary very interesting and could have been longer. Plenary sessions and tracker system provided opportunities. We participants in forums probably need some skill-training in efficient use of such opportunities.

... however ...

I do not feel that the kind of depth I would have liked was reached in debating some of the issues surrounding literacy. They were clearly identified but not grappled with.

The physical limitations of the theatre negatively impacted the possibility of a *real forum* with *real dialogue.*

Too much descriptions and complacency. Not enough issues.

Sometimes I feel we got too caught up in language and terms and identifying issues instead of debating them.

To a certain extent – but we could have had more "open forums" i.e. slightly smaller groups than the plenary, try to cover more than one program issue.

Could be more available time for dialogue.

3. Did it extend literacy networks?

I'm happy to have had the introduction to the National Literacy Database.

... however ...

This was good, but also I would have liked more time to develop this so that we could be sure it worked after the conference.

4. Did it encourage planning future literacy initiatives?

Planning committees should be organized on a regular basis, probably community-based.

Lot to discuss and debate at further (future) conferences.

Provided a good setting for discussion on future initiatives.

... however ...

Probably, but I feel singularly uninspired – in some cases my time was wasted by people who want to fix everything for everyone and make everyone equal – its a dream!!! We're not all the same and we don't all want the same things.

Did the following aspects of the Conference structure and design work?

1. Workshop index/response cards

Good exercise to write down ideas. Need better, more thorough summary so we can see how responses are being heard.

Helped me focus on some key points from the workshops.

A rating and suggestion box would be useful.

Good to reflect and collect immediately.

Very well done!

... however ...

Difficult to fill out in framework of questions asked.

It seemed such a good idea – but for me it felt jarring and I didn't feel it was clear what the purpose was.

You'd have to be some kind of a genius to answer those questions in "2 or 3 minutes"!

But I wanted an opportunity to critique the facilitators/presenters and the cards didn't allow a framework for this.

2. Tracker and plenary sessions

It was a good process for tying together a variety of thoughts that were emerging across the various workshops.

Appreciated the overview of the whole conference. The most frustrating part about conferences is not being able to be at more places at once. Tracker helped.

I can only judge from the plenary session on Saturday. Impressive.

Very informative and helpful.

I think the tracking experiment was successful. The Saturday plenary was a little fuzzy, but the Sunday was great. The exactitude of the summaries from the front led to focused and specific debate.

It was wonderful to hear about workshops I missed.

... however ...

A brief summary of each workshop may have been more useful. No one could attend all. Concept of cooperative learning possibility should have been applied.

Should have focused on diversity not tried to present the overall view.

Would have preferred to have a group track the conference and different people report back at plenary.

Would have preferred a woman as tracker or as one of the trackers.

A more conducive physical environment would have helped – use of flip charts or posters or overheads would have kept themes before us and encourage dialogue.

Plenary session needs to be in a setting so people can comfortably discuss issues presented. Good idea to break up plenary throughout conference vs. saving it for end when most people have left.

Yes but ... I had some trouble with one person (white male, academic etc.) interpreting and analyzing the information for us – perhaps 2 or 3 or 4 need to play that role.

Plenary sessions a bit long-winded.

3. Working brunch

This was so positive. Rarely do we have a chance at conferences to actually plan for social change.

Very good wind-up of the conference, to create more of a unified feeling in the struggle to gain acknowledgement.

Valuable to discuss with others. Again found an informative source in discussing issues with individuals.

A good opportunity to meet in smaller groups around common issues.

Some useful ideas. People could have been 'prepped' a little better to achieve more focus.

It was an excellent opportunity to share/exchange ideas and initiative – discuss strategies to improve networking.

Fun mostly.

Sunday brunch tasty and interesting.

... however ...

People too "conferenced out" to eat, talk and walk.

Too scattered – lunch meetings of strangers are not easily productive.

Nice idea but not enough time to work well. Would have been good to have this on Saturday over dinner so that we would have had some time to shape ideas/plans overnight.

Oddly unsatisfactory – perhaps because we were conferenced out.

Comments abount Conference Organization:

You did a good job of organizing the conference. The enormity of the task is staggering. Well done! Why not involve MORE learners. If literacy is to be learner-based why were there only 11 learners in attendance? Maybe we are simply promoting more elitism.

I really appreciated the fact that people from all over were at this conference. It helps to bring in ideas that are new to us. You did a great job. I was impressed with the organization.

Good networking breaks between sessions: $^1/_2$ hour coffee break is good.

Open forums, especially as time goes on, are great idea.

Great conference.

Great organization. No glitches. Congratulations.

Loved the political directions that led to choices of workshops, topics and presenters.

... however ...

Should have been more learner involvement i.e. attendance and panel discussions.

FOLLOW-UP TO LITERACY 2000

WOULD PARTICIPANTS BE WILLING TO HOST POST-CONFERENCE SYMPOSIUMS? THE CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE THIS REPORT TO BECOME THE BASIS FOR FUTURE WORKING SYMPOSIUMS WHERE INITIATIVES IN RESEARCH, PRACTISE, AND PROGRAM MODELS CAN BE SHARED AND COMMON CONCERNS CAN BE DISCUSSED AND ACTED ON.

These are some specific undertakings initiated as a result of Literacy 2000:

Trade unionists who attended have initiated the establishment of a Literacy Advisory Committee within the B.C. Federation of Labour.

The Adult Basic Education Association of B.C. and Literacy B.C. have applied for funding to host a forum on volunteerism and instructor accreditation to establish some provincial policies on these two issues.

A network of feminist literacy workers is being set up through the Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women.

Douglas College is developing an affiliation with the Nicaraguan Institute for Popular Education and Research.

The National Adult Literacy Databank now has a listing of participants who expressed interest in issues which were or became a focus during the conference, so further networking is possible.

The Adult Literacy Contact Centre in Vancouver will loan tapes of the Literacy 2000 opening plenary and workshops. (#622 – 510 W. Hastings Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6B 1L8 phone: 604/684-0624)

General outcomes of the conference include the following:

Several programs are considering adapting the Puente model for their specific situations.

According to feedback which we have received, changes which insure a more equal representation of students will be occurring in many programs as a result of the focus which this issue received at the conference.

Several people have told us that they intend to apply aspects of Literacy 2000's design to promote debate during conferences which they are planning.

Student writings which were on display during the conference will be used in displays promoting literacy.

Workshop Facilitators

Opening Plenary

Hilary Cheung, Brenda Braiden, Valerie Oszust, Carol St. Jean, Donna Stephens, Mary Alice Johnson, Marie Grinstrand, Lynn Fogwill, Basha Rahn, Marina Melnikoff

Defining Literacy: Conception & Strategies

UNDERSTANDING LITERACY AS A DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS	Paula Davis
CLOSING GAPS BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTISE	Trudy Lothian
REVEALING FACTS: STATISTICS CANADA'S 1990 STUDY	Jean Cockburn

Meeting Learner Needs: Perspectives & Directions

LEARNERS SPEAK OUT	Brenda Pickard, Joyce Cameron
PUENTE PROJECT: BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA	Ted James, Mia Gordon
TALKING ABOUT LIVES: PLANNING PROGRAMS FOR WOMEN	Evelyn Battell
ALBSU'S STUDENT ACCREDITATION INITIATIVE	Robin Millar

Reaching Out: Literacy & the Community

BREAKING THE STIGMA/RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES: SWEDEN	Donalda Turkington
READ-WRITE: KINGSTON, ONTARIO	Judy Crawford
HACKNEY LEARNING CENTRE: LONDON, ENGLAND	Don MacPherson, Lorraine Fox
REGINA LIBRARY'S LITERACY TUTORS: SASKATCHEWAN	Thomas Quigley
COMBINING PRACTICE & THEORY IN COMMUNITY LITERACY	Tim Shireman
APPLYING FRIERE, RE-THINKING CONCEPTIONS: QUEBEC	Connie Broatch, Lynn Hunter
PROMOTING LEARNER-DRIVEN PROGRAMS	Kate Nonesuch

Interpreting Literacy: Culture & Context

TAKING MULTILINGUAL ISSUES INTO ACCOUNT: TORONTO	Cecil Klassen
TREATING LEARNERS AS EXPERTS: HALIFAX NOVA SCOTIA	Patty Bossort
SNOWDRIFT CHIPEWYAN PROJECT: NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	Jill Plumbley, Meg Hoppe

Working it Through: Literacy & the Job Site

EXCHANGING VIEWPOINTS: IDENTIFYING OBSTACLES	Mia Gordon
BEST PROJECT: ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR	Linda Tosczak, David Cadman
READING/WRITING ON-THE-JOB: BRITISH COLUMBIA	Rob Dramer
VANCOUVER CITY HALL PROJECT: BRITISH COLUMBIA	Linda Hackett
WORKBASE: LONDON, ENGLAND	Mary Carlisle, Mardi Joyce

Training Instructors: Experience & Accreditation

INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATION SCHEME: ENGLAND & WALES	Audrey Thomas
LEGITIMIZING PRACTITIONERS' SKILLS AND WORTH	Claudette Laberge
MOVING ON: FROM LEARNER TO TEACHER	Alister Cumming